

# Desolate Era

## (莽荒纪)

### Book 36

## Daolord of the Fourth Step

### I Eat Tomatoes

## (我吃西红柿)

Story Description:

Fate had never been kind to Ji Ning. Wracked by illnesses and infirm his entire life on Earth, Ning knew early on that he would die as a teenager. What he didn't know was that there really was such a thing as life after death, and that the multiverse was a far larger place than he thought. A lucky twist of fate (one of the few in Ning's life) meant that Ning was reborn into a world of Immortals and monsters, of Ki Refiners and powerful Fiendgods, a world where Dynasties lasted for millions of years. A world which is both greater...and yet also smaller... than he ever could imagine. He would have the opportunity to join them, and in this life, Ning swore to himself, he would never let himself be weak again! The Era he was born into was a Desolate one, but Ning would make it his era.

Original Story can be found here: [Link](#)

# Chapter 1: Revival

Vastheaven Palace.

Within a hidden estate-world, there were beautiful valleys filled with fragrant flowers and birdsong. A golden-robed Ji Ning was seated in the lotus position atop the grass, and in front of the grass before him was a black-white piece of jade. This jade talisman was the 'Lifeblood' Dao-seal which Emperor Maniseal had once bestowed upon Ning in order to curry favor with the Paragon of Pills. However, it wasn't one of his most valuable ones, as it was only able to revive Samsara Daolords. Next to the piece of black-white jade was a giant, mountain-sized pile of countless chaos jewels.

In the exact instant when the distant Archon Silksnow slew Ji Ning...

Rumble... the black-white jade talisman instantly lit up with dazzling light. The strand of truesoul which Ning had left behind in the talisman slowly began to rebuild itself from the talisman's energy, almost like an infant gestating within his mother's belly or like life taking shape within an egg. Ning's strand of truesoul slowly began to recover and reform within that white-black jade talisman, and as more of it recovered he slowly began to gain mental clarity as well.

"Just now, I was killed... and I could sense my consciousness descend into infinite darkness. Now that I've come back... I feel as though I have been brought back into endless light."

This experience of dying and coming back to life had truly and completely stunned Ning. Ning instantly gained a fresh perspective on what the nature of the Dao truly was.

Thruuuuum! Ning's consciousness instantly began to absorb energy from the outside world. The many chaos jewels which his avatar had prepared long ago were instantly activated and their energy was drawn into Ning nonstop.

Whoooosh. As Ning began to actively drawn in energy, his body quickly began to reform around him as the black-white jade talisman

disintegrated soundlessly. The figure of a white-robed youth began to coalesce in the empty air within the gorge, his body glowing with light and looking rather ethereal. However, as more time passed his body gradually began to grow increasingly solid. By the time he had absorbed more than half of the mountain of chaos jewels, his aura was completely restored and reserved once more.

The white-robed Ning descended from the skies, exchanging a glance with the golden-robed Ning. Both had joyless looks on their faces; the only expression they had was that of worry.

“My true body was reformed thanks to the Dao-seal, but brother Ninedust...” Ning was worried. “Archon Silksnow saw the Hegemon appear, but he still chose to kill me no matter the cost. He probably went after the treasures I left behind. Ninedust was hiding inside my estate-world. I hope he doesn’t end up in Archon Silksnow’s hands.”

Whoosh. With but a thought, Ning exited from this estate-world.

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Outside the estate-world was Ji Ning’s residence within Vastheaven Palace.

“Master.” The fiery-robed woman seated by herself atop a distant boulder revealed a smile.

“Youji.” Ning smiled back at her.

“Master, why has your true form returned?” Su Youji was quite surprised. She had spent almost all of the past few years in Vastheaven Palace, but she generally only saw the golden-robed avatar.

Ning chuckled. “I got beaten back.”

“Who was able to beat you, Master?” Su Youji didn’t believe it. Her master was virtually invincible amongst Daolords, right?

“Haha, I’d rather not discuss such an embarrassing event in detail. Where’s Pillsaint? Still making his pills?” Ning asked.

“Yes, Pillsaint’s gone absolutely pill-crazy,” Su Youji said.

Suddenly, a spacetime ripple swept across the entire Vastheaven Palace. Su Youji didn't notice, but Ning revealed a nervous look on his face. He was worried about Ninedust's safety, and so he immediately bowed respectfully in the direction of the ripple. "Greetings, Hegemon."

A pitch-black tear in spacetime appeared in front of Ning, followed by a snow-robed, white-bearded old man with six horns on his head emerging from it. When he saw Ning, he revealed a surprised look: "Darknorth, you are actually still alive?"

When Ning saw the Hegemon, he let out a sigh of relief. This was because he could sense that his weapons and treasures were all on the Hegemon; clearly, the Hegemon had picked them up for him.

"Long ago, Hegemon, you arranged for me to enter that alternate universe. I was fortunate enough to acquire a 'Lifeblood' Dao-seal forged by Emperor Maniseal," Ning said. "It was all thanks to that Dao-seal that I was able to survive."

"A Lifeblood Dao-seal from Maniseal?" Hegemon Brightshore nodded slowly. "No wonder you survived. Maniseal is an extremely arrogant and solitary figure; if you were able to attract his interest, you must have had quite the experience."

Ning secretly muttered to himself. It had nothing to with him attracting Maniseal's interest; in fact, he had never even met Emperor Maniseal! It was all because the man wanted to gain favor with the Paragon of Pills. That was why he had bestowed the Dao-seal upon Ning.

"Oh, right. Here are your treasures." Hegemon Brightseal waved his hand, causing the six Northbow swords, the Hegemon armor, the estate-world, and the many other treasures to fly towards Ning. The six Northbow swords in particular began to shiver; clearly, they were extremely excited upon seeing their master again.

Ning waved his hand, accepting all of the treasures. Some he stored away and some he wore. As for the six Northbow swords, they re-entered the sheath on his back.

Ning finally relaxed after acquiring these treasures. He had only

acquired them after many dangerous adventures; if he lost them all, he really would be heartbroken. Ning could also sense that the Ninedust Sectlord was still safely within his estate-world. This caused Ning to reveal a smile.

“Thank you, Hegemon. These are the fruits from Crimsonwave Temple I promised.” Ning immediately offered a jade green gourd which was filled with all of the remaining fruits from Crimsonwave Temple.

“I cannot accept this.” Hegemon Brightshore smiled and shook his head. “You asked me to save your life, and if I had done so I would’ve accepted these fruits. But... I was just a bit too slow, and Archon Silksnow didn’t show any mercy even though I was there. I wasn’t able to save you; you saved yourself thanks to that Dao-seal, coming back to life. How can I accept?”

“These fruits are nothing more than a portion of the treasures I own,” Ning said hurriedly. “Hegemon, you sent all of my treasures over to me. They are very important, especially my lifeblood weapons! Darknorth is filled with tremendous gratitude towards you.”

“A failure is a failure.” Hegemon Brightshore shook his head. “I’m not going to be greedy over the treasures of a young fellow like yourself.”

Ning was rather speechless. Still, high-level figures generally had exceptional levels of pride. Everyone had bottom lines they would not cross without a very good reason! But of course, a sufficiently tempting treasure might be a good enough reason for them to cross their bottom line. A completely undamaged realmship, for example, would be enough to drive any Hegemon crazy. Ning, however, was just a Daolord; Hegemon Brightshore really didn’t have much interest in his items. Even if he knew that Ning had an omnigeddon bloodfruit tree, he still wouldn’t care. The verdant azuresoul might interest him slightly, but he still wouldn’t go crazy over it.

This was because one would have to first find a Chaos Primordial before one could use the verdant azuresoul to take control over it. One had to remember that even for Autarchs finding a Chaos Primordial was an

incredibly difficult task, much less for someone like Hegemon Brightshore who had always resided within the Flamedragon Realmverse.

In other words... even if he knew all of the treasures Ning possessed, he still wouldn't be so shameless as to pilfer from Ning. And of course, he had no idea that Ning had treasures like the verdant azuresoul.

"T-then..." Ning's eyes suddenly lit up. He immediately said, "Darknorth has something to ask of you."

"Oh?" Hegemon Brightshore looked at Ning.

"I need some precious materials." Ning waved his hand, causing a large number of characters to immediately appear in the air next to him. The text narrated the many materials Ning needed to reach the third level of the [Sword Dao Body] technique. His previous body had been destroyed, after all. Although he had rebuilt his true body, his restored body was just his 'ordinary' body.

His protective divine ability? His nine novessence arts? They were all gone. He didn't care about the nine novessence arts, as they were already getting to be a bit too weak... but the protective divine ability was still of use.

Previously, when Ning had battled against Archon Silksnow, the reason why he hadn't died when he was getting blasted back prior to his [Heartsword] breakthrough was precisely because his protective divine ability was quite powerful! But of course, if he wanted to train to the fourth level, where his body would be comparable to a top-grade Eternal treasure, the amount of treasures he would have to expend would cause even a Hegemon some pain. Ning suspected that not even his omnigeddon bloodfruit tree would be enough.

"I remember you buying these things last time?" Hegemon Brightshore chuckled.

"I have to re-train this divine ability," Ning said helplessly. "If I use my remaining fruits to trade for them, it should be enough, yes?"

"It is enough." Hegemon Brightshore smiled. He was starting to like the

kid more and more. He really did want to acquire those fruits, but he absolutely was not going to take advantage of Ning, a mere Daolord. The materials which Ning had requested were in fact of equal value to these fruits! However, if Ning wished to trade his fruits, he would've been able to trade with either the Dao Alliance or the Ancient cultivators for them... and he probably would've gotten a better deal. These fruits were rarer and more important to Eternal Emperors, after all.

"I'll accept these fruits and will immediately assemble the materials. I'll arrange for them to be sent to Vastheaven Palace within one month." Hegemon Brightshore accepted the jade green gourd. "Also... you should keep the fact that you at Vastheaven Palace a tight secret. Do not let Archon Silksnow find out."

"Understood," Ning said immediately. He still was not a match for Archon Silksnow just yet.

"If he really does attack, you can immediately ask me for assistance. I'll tear straight through spacetime and immediately arrive at Vastheaven Palace," Hegemon Brightshore said. "Last time, I was a bit slow because I didn't know where you were, exactly; I had to rely on your servant's clone guiding the way for me. I'll be much faster next time, because I can descend directly upon Vastheaven Palace. However, I'll only intervene on your behalf once. Any other dangers you encounter, you'll have to resolve yourself."

"Understood." Ning nodded. To Hegemons and Archons, Daolords really didn't matter that much. Even though some Daolords were incredibly talented, once their lifespans ended they would almost all perish.

Hegemon Brightshore, for example, still viewed Archon Silksnow as a peer despite being far more powerful than him! But when he viewed Daolords, he viewed them as being kids. No matter how much of a fuss they kicked up, they would still just be kids. There had never been a Daolord who was qualified to treat with Hegemons and Archons as equals.

Whoosh. Hegemon Brightshore tore a hole in spacetime, then stepped into it and departed.

## Chapter 2: Farewells

“W-was that Hegemon Brightshore?” Only now did Su Youji dare to speak.

“Yes.” Ji Ning nodded.

“Master, just now, you said Archon Silksnow...” Su Youji had overheard quite a bit and now knew much of the story.

Ning immediately instructed, “You cannot make this information public, nor can you reveal the fact that I came back to life thanks to a Dao-seal! Once Archon Silksnow finds out... given his temperament, there’s no way he’ll let this matter rest. Although Hegemon Brightshore promised to help out, for him to assist me once is already giving me great face. In the end, I’ll have to rely on my own skills to deal with Archon Silksnow.”

“But we’re talking about Archon Silksnow! T-this...” Su Youji was extremely worried. No matter how powerful her master was, he was still just a Daolord. How was he supposed to fight against one of the eight awesome lords of the Sacred Cities, Archon Silksnow?

“That’s not for you to worry about,” Ning instructed. He then waved his hand, causing a silver-robed man to appear next to him. It was the Ninedust Sectlord.

“Darknorth.” When Ninedust saw Ning, he immediately revealed a look of delight. “You are unharmed? Thank goodness. I was worried about something happening to you.”

“Haha, you were worried about something happening to me and you being unable to escape, right?” Ning teased.

“You jackass, I really was worried about you,” Ninedust said, feigning anger.

Ning chuckled, then let out a sigh: “Your worries weren’t unfounded. I really did end up being killed by Archon Silksnow.”

“What? You died?!” Ninedust was shocked.

“I once acquired a special treasure which can allow a Daolord to be brought back to life.” Ning didn’t hide what actually happened as he pointed to the surrounding area. “Look, we’re already in Vastheaven Palace! As for you? It was technically Hegemon Brightshore who intervened and rescued you.”

Ninedust started to understand. Moments later, he let out a chuckle. “Hegemon Brightshore? He’s always been filled with enmity towards us Ancient cultivators; there’s no way he would’ve gone out of his way to save me. I imagine he intervened because of you. When it comes down to it, the person I owe a debt to is still you.” Clearly, the long-running feud between the Brightshore Kingdom and the Ancient cultivators made it so that Ninedust didn’t feel any goodwill towards Hegemon Brightshore.

“Oh, right. There’s something I want to make clear to you,” Ninedust said, his face suddenly turning solemn.

“What is it?” Ning asked.

Ninedust glanced at the nearby Su Youji. Suddenly, he used his Immortal energy to form a barrier that completely blocked them off from the outside world.

Ninedust had mixed emotions on his face when he said, “Darknorth, we’ve experience life and death on numerous occasions together. At the beginning, we were on par in terms of power... and even later on, you were only slightly more powerful than me. Slowly, though, you’ve become more and more powerful. When we were in the Autarch’s estate-world within the Aeonian Kingdom, I could do nothing but watch when you fought against the flame beasts and the sea dragons. Later on, I could only watch when you battled against Archon Silksnow. More and more, I can sense how great the gap between us has become.”

Ning was stunned.

“Slowly, without me even realizing it, you have completely surpassed me in power. Even if we were to keep adventuring together, it really wouldn’t work out. A good test for me would be far too easy for you, while an adventure suitable for you would be absolutely lethal to me.” Ninedust

sighed. "If this continues... it won't be good for either of us."

Ning nodded slowly. He understood what Ninedust was saying, but... were the two of them, lifelong brothers, about to separate?

"I have used a Voidsea Jade seal and gained guidance from an Autarch's Dao, then studied over three hundred Hegemonic legacies. Thanks to all of these fortuitous encounters, I can sense that my chances at the Daomerge are getting better and better." Ninedust's eyes blazed with eagerness. "That's why I can't let myself just come to a halt. I have to keep adventuring and keep testing myself, so that I can improve my Daomerge chances."

"Either I'll succeed in the Daomerge, or I'll die in my adventures. Darknorth!" Ninedust looked towards Ning. "Let us part ways here. You have your cultivation path to walk, and I have my Daomerge path to embark on..."

Ning was silent for a long moment. Finally, he nodded. "Very well. My avatar shall continue to reside here at Vastheaven Palace. If you need anything, you can simply send word here."

"It'll be just as easy for you to reach me. You merely need to send word to the Palace of Ancient Truth," Ninedust said. "The Palace of Ancient Truth has branches throughout all eight of the Sacred Cities of the Dao Alliance. In truth, we Ancient cultivators are behind it. Once you send a message to the Palace of Ancient Truth, it'll naturally send word to the Ancient cultivators and my avatar will immediately be notified."

Ninedust had a very complex look on his face, but he forced a wide smile: "Darknorth, where do you plan to go adventuring next? Deep into the Terror Starsea, or...?"

"I'm in no rush for now. I'm going to quietly meditate for a period of time. I was just slain by Archon Silksnow slew me and then brought back to life by that Dao-seal, after all. This process of death and rebirth... it caused me to gain many new insights which I wish to meditate on," Ning said.

"Understood." Ninedust took a deep breath, then said solemnly:

“Brother, I’m going to leave now. Be careful, and be especially wary of that Archon Silksnow fellow. He’s definitely not going to give up, if only for the sake of acquiring that realmship part.”

Ning looked at Ninedust. He knew that once they parted today, it was possible that they would never see each other ever again. “You also need to be careful on your adventures. Make sure you don’t die an early death. I believe in you. You’ll definitely succeed in your Daomerge!” Ning said.

“Haha, right. I’ll definitely succeed in my Daomerge. In fact, both of us will! Haha. I’m leaving now. No need to show me off!” Ninedust immediately flew into the skies.

Ning raised his head, watching as the barriers in the sky automatically parted and let Ninedust leave. A streak of light shot through the skies, followed by a dimensional ripple appearing off in the distance. The streak of light flew into the ripple, then disappeared without a trace.

Ning continued to watch silently, head upraised. “Take care.” After a long moment, Ning finally murmured these final words.

“Master,” Su Youji said. She hadn’t been able to hear any of that conversation due to the barrier of Immortal energy which Ninedust had set up.

“It’s fine.” Ning was feeling rather frustrated and disheartened. Indeed, he had his own path of cultivation to walk, as did Ninedust. Ninedust wanted to focus on the Daomerge, after all.

As for Ning himself, his chances at the Daomerge were still too slim. Voidsea Jade seals were of little to no use to him, while the Hegemonic legacies were only useful as references. None of those Hegemons had Daos that were as complex as Ning’s Omega Sword Dao, after all! Even the Autarch’s Dao was merely of use as a guidepost, as the Autarch had not embarked upon an Omega Dao as a Daolord.

“For now, my goal should be to become a Daolord of the Fourth Step as soon as possible. Once I reach that level, I’ll be qualified to fight against my foes... and I’ll even have a chance to acquire enough treasures to ask an Autarch to reverse spacetime and revive my wife.”

“Ninedust’s goal, however, is the Daomerge. I hope he succeeds in it.”

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The first thing Ning did in the upcoming days was to visit Emperor Solesky. Emperor Solesky had immediately noticed when Ning had allowed Ninedust to leave, after all, and so Ning had to advise Emperor Solesky that he absolutely cannot divulge the fact that Ning’s true body was at Vastheaven Palace.

Soon, after half a month, a Daolord of the Brightshore Kingdom came delivering treasures.

That very day. Vastheaven Palace. Darknorth’s estate.

“I’m planning to go out wandering for a bit. Right now, the only ones who know that I am at Vastheaven Palace are you, big brother Solesky, and the two of you. You absolutely must not reveal this information; otherwise, a calamity shall descend upon us.” Ning glanced at Emperor Solesky, Su Youji, and Pillsaint.

“Don’t worry.” Emperor Solesky nodded.

“Master, I wish to go by your side,” Su Youji said immediately. Pillsaint opened his mouth, wanting to agree.

“No need,” Ning interrupted. “I’m just going to search for new insights and meditate on the Dao. Travelling alone will be better.”

Su Youji and Pillsaint could only nod.

“I’m leaving now. If there’s anything you wish to tell me, you can simply inform my avatar.” After finishing his words, Ning took a single step forwards and disappeared gracefully, passing through Vastheaven Palace’s barriers and vanishing within the skies.

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Vastheaven Palace was located within the Vastheaven Everworld, which as an everworld was naturally an incredibly gigantic place. Countless living beings were here, and there were some places where experts were as common as the clouds. There were even a few Ancestral Immortals and

even Chaos Immortals who arose from this place! There were other places that, due to special geography, only had mortals and had no cultivators whatsoever.

Whoosh. Ning strode slowly through the everworld. Although there were quite a few dangerous places within it, given how strong Ning was there really was nothing within it which could pose a threat to him. In fact, even the Emperor who had originally established this everworld was significantly weaker than the current Ning!

“This region is quite interesting.” Ning stared off into the distance at a vast region which was hundreds of millions of kilometers in size. This was a region that was completely surrounded by a titanic, barren marsh. As a result, it was completely separated from the outside world. This was a land of ordinary mortals, and even the most supreme of cultivators were at most at the Celestial Immortal level. There was simply no way for them to pass through the great marsh and reach the outside world, and so it was a self-contained realm unto itself.

The desolate marsh had probably been naturally formed when the everworld was first created. Not even some of the weaker Daolords were capable of traversing it.

“Seven kingdoms fighting for supremacy.” Ning stared at the vast land, then nodded slightly. “Countless living beings are dying at any given moment in this place. Very well then... this shall be the place! Here, I shall search for the secrets of mortality, the secrets of life and death.”

# Chapter 3: Boulder Transformation

In this vast realm, seven nations were striving for dominance. The cultivation system here was completely different from that of the outside world. There were three major stages known as ‘warriors’, ‘masters’, and ‘grandmasters’. Reaching the ‘grandmaster’ level was akin to becoming a Void-level Earth Immortal in the outside world. Ji Ning transformed himself and entered this realm, beginning to truly experience it and live in it as he watched countless living beings be born and die.

“Waaaaaaa!” An infant was born within a large manor, bawling his lungs out.

The white-robed Ning appeared outside the manor. His body blurred, then transformed into a middle-aged man bearing a flag. On the flag were two simple characters which meant ‘fortune teller’. He walked in front of the manor, then said to the two manor guards, “This young master is connected to me via destiny.”

“A filthy fortune teller like you is connected to him?”

“Beat it! Fuck off!” The two guards immediately shouted at this fortune-teller, shooing him away.

Ning didn’t let himself grow angry. When he was pushed away and sent stumbling back, he called out loudly, “But we really are connected by destiny?”

The child who was born on this day within this manor was the manor-master’s only child. His name was ‘Xuhu’.

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Three years later. The white-robed Ning once more appeared outside this estate. He stared at the ten-plus children playing in the mud from afar, then smiled slightly. His body blurred as he transformed into a four-year-old child as well dressed in red clothes, then ran barefoot towards the others.

“Where are you from? Why haven’t I ever met you before?” The child

who spoke was surnamed Wang, and he was the only son of the lord of the manor. Wang Xuhu had a very high status, and he stared puzzledly at the red-lipped, white-toothed child in front of him.

“None of your business.” The red-clothed child spoke in a very overbearing manner. “Hey, that’s some nice mud art you made. Lemme see!” As he spoke, he reached out to grab the horse-shaped mud sculpture. Plop! The thing completely broke apart.

“Y-you...” The child, Wang Xuhu, stared wide-eyed. Tears were beginning to appear, and he was so angry he gritted his teeth. “Give it back!” As he spoke, he ran forwards to punch the red-clothed child.

“Beat him up!” The other children all joined him in picking on this new, strange child.

“You want to hit me?” The red-clothed child moved like a blur, landing a kick on Xuhu’s butt and sending him sprawling on the ground.

“Waaaaaaaah!” Xuhu was both ashamed and enraged. Still sobbing, he clambered to his feet as he continued to charge towards the red-clothed child.

“What’s going on? Why are you all fighting?” Some of the manor guests had noticed what was going on over here. The red-clothed child immediately began to run, soon charging into the distant forests and disappearing.

Xuhu was the only son of the manor lord. That very night he was struck by a severe fever which drove him delirious. This terrified the manor lord into immediately sending for a physician, but three days later Xuhu miraculously recovered on his own. He began to quickly grow in strength, and his talent for cultivation became increasingly astonishing as well. At just eighteen years of age, he stepped into the ‘master’ stage.

Warriors, masters, grandmasters... the three principle stages of cultivation in this realm. Warriors were ordinary mortals who trained physically, making it slow for them to increase their power. At their peak, they were at most comparable to the Xiantian lifeforms of the Three Realms.

Masters began to accumulate a core within their bodies... they were comparable to the Zifu Disciples and Wanxiang Adepts of the Three Realms.

Grandmasters began to establish a world within their bodies... they were comparable to the Primal Daoists and Void-level Earth Immortals of the Three Realms.

Those who surpassed the grandmaster level were comparable to Celestial Immortals. This realm only occasionally gave birth to a new Celestial Immortal, and thus their numbers were extremely low.

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Ning continued to watch as Xuhu grew up. When Xuhu turned eighteen, he had already become the number one hero in the surrounding area, with no one his equal in a million kilometer area! He was extremely powerful and ferocious. However, bandits and robbers began to pour into the region. Xuhu led soldiers to attack them, but ended up being defeated in battle. He fled to a mountain village, and there he met the love of his life... 'Rose'.

"Sir, I'd like to buy two pounds of pork." The girl led the sickly Xuhu out to purchase some food.

"Wait a bit." The butcher was a pudgy, white-robed grandpa who was extremely muscular-looking. He picked up his saber, then began to hack through the pig bones and carve apart the meat.

When Xuhu saw this, his eyes began to lit up. "Rose, you can go home first," Xuhu instructed. The girl did just that with those two pounds of meat.

"Sir, please teach me your saber-arts." Xuhu immediately fell down to his knees.

"Ahaha! I don't know any 'saber-arts'! All I know is how to kill pigs and butcher them," the elderly butcher said with a loud laugh.

"Then I want to learn how to kill pigs and butcher meat," Xuhu said hurriedly.

“I’m not gonna pay you a salary.” The old man looked at him.

“I don’t need one,” Xuhu replied.

From that day forth, the old butcher gained an apprentice. Half a year later, the old butcher suddenly vanished. No matter how Xuhu searched for him, he couldn’t find the old man. He had no choice but to bring the girl back to his homeland.

“Ahahaha... I’ve cultivated for many years, but I’ve never been a pig-sticking butcher before. That really was a first.” The old butcher had transformed back into the white-robed Ning and was standing at the peak of a mountain, watching as Xuhu led his wife away.

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After learning that set of saber-arts, Xuhu began to develop at an unstoppable pace as his level of insight grew deeper and deeper. When he went back home, he slew those bandits with ease. As his insight increased even further, he actually stepped into the ‘grandmaster’ stage. When the emperor of his nation heard the news, the emperor personally sent someone over to confer the title of ‘general’ upon him!

He had established his reputation, bringing glory to clan and ancestors alike. He became one of the pillars of the entire nation, commanding over three hundred thousand soldiers to guard the borderlands. He spent more than eight hundred years serving in this capacity.

He had a total of three sons and one daughter, and a plethora of grandchildren.

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Finally, the internal situation of the nation took a turn for the worse as they lost battle after battle. Xuhu did his best to hold on, leading his army in an orderly retreat, but the overall situation had already been set in stone. There was simply no way for Xuhu to reverse it. He was ambushed and surrounded by eight enemy grandmasters, causing him to suffer severe injuries. In the end, he didn’t die on the battlefield but was about to perish in bed due to the wounds suffered during that assassination

attempt.

Xuhu lay there in bed, surrounded by the aura of death. Within the room stood the emperor, the senior ministers, and Xuhu's children and grandchildren.

"Your Majesty, your old servant is about to depart." Xuhu's voice was hoarse and his face was ashen.

"Old general... my beloved old general... you can't just go like this!" The young emperor was completely terrified. The old general had been his final source of support, and it was thanks to him that their nation had been able to resist for over two hundred years despite the situation being so grim. Once the old general died, everything really would come to an end. Their enemy nations were quite vicious; they had been willing to sacrifice eight grandmasters, sending them into the capital to engage in an assassination attempt.

"Flowers bloom, then shrivel; the grass grows verdant, then shrivels. This is the cycle of life." Xuhu turned to look at his sobbing, kneeling children and grandchildren. He was quite relaxed, feeling as though he was on the verge of release.

Suddenly, a white-robed youth appeared in front of the emperor before the bed. The white-robed youth looked at him.

"You are..." Xuhu looked at the white-robed youth. Suddenly, he turned stiff – he couldn't help but think of the red-clothed child who had given him a kick so many years ago and caused him to enter a three-day fever. That child had exactly the same eyes as the youth before him.

He then thought of his teacher, that old, grandfatherly butcher who had taught him saber-arts. His teacher had the same eyes and the same look on his face.

"Life is a cycle, and your cycle has come to an end." Ning smiled. "I have been by your side for nearly a thousand years. It can be said that the ties of destiny linked us together. I shall ensure that you keep your memories and allow you to be reborn into the cycle of reincarnation... but our karmic ties shall have to come to an end. From this day forth, everything shall be up

to you.”

“Master... Master...” Xuhu called out, but his aura grew weaker and weaker.

“Go on. Go.” Ning nodded.

That day, Ning personally escorted Xuhu into the cycle of reincarnation, ensuring that he was reborn into the belly of a woman who lived in a village located within a secluded mountain paradise.

“It is time for me to go find the next person I am destined to meet.” Ning smiled and took a step forwards, leaving the general’s estate. He once more transformed into a middle-aged man who bore a flag with the words ‘fortune teller’ on it, then began to amble through the streets.

“Buns for sale! Steamed buns for sale!” The street he was on was filled with meat bun stalls, and there was a child hunched over the ground playing a game.

The flag-bearing Ning walked over to the child. “Hey kid!” Ning called out.

“Huh?” Puzzled, the kid lifted his head up to look at Ning.

“You and I are linked by destiny,” Ning said.

“You swindler, do you think to deceive my child?” A burly woman immediately charged out from behind the meat bun stall with a dough-roller in her hands. The flag-bearing Ning was frightened into a hasty retreat, but as he fled he called out loudly, “No, we really are linked by destiny!”

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Fortune teller. Innhouse keeper. Coffin maker. Brothel owner. An old deathsworn soldier who lived his life out on the battlefield...

Ning took on one form after another, watching from up close as countless mortals struggled through life. Their lives... their deaths... their rises... their falls.

Time flowed on. The seven warring states ended up as a war between

three states, and in the end it was the Qian state which unified the world. However, the Qian dynasty then broke apart in a civil war, with the Southern Qian and the Northern Qian battling against each other.

Eventually, the Qian dynasty fell and another arose.

Ning lived through each and every dynasty, continuing to search for the secrets of life and death. Given his wisdom and intelligence, he slowly began to gain more and more of the insights he sought.

“This... this should be the secret for my Omega Sword Dao to make its next breakthrough.” By now, he had lived in this realm for over 130 million years. On this day, Ning was standing at the peak of a towering mountain, gazing down at the world with a feeling of joy in his heart and a smile on his lips.

Whoosh. Ning transformed into a boulder that was many meters tall. The boulder landed upon the mountain peak, looking quite unremarkable. He just sat there, allowing the wind to blow against him and the sun to bake him. There was even an occasional passerby who would write a few words on him.

After transforming into the boulder, Ning just sat there and quietly stared at the vast world as well as the countless living beings who were born and reborn within it. In his heart, his five major sword stances began to merge. Blood Drop, Yin-Yang, Soleheart, Heavenbreaker, Shadowless... they slowly began to become one.

# Chapter 4: Omega Sword Dao, Stage Four

Millions of years went by after Ji Ning transformed into that boulder atop the mountain peak. One day, a thick mist suddenly arose around the great mountain. The mist was so thick as to block out the skies and the sun. It covered an area of tens of thousands of kilometers, including every single part of the great mountain.

“What a massive fog.”

“What’s going on? Why am I walking in circles? I keep on ending up here.”

Some of the ordinary mortals who passed through this place quickly discovered how bizarre the mist was. Word quickly spread and some experts began to arrive and explore the mist. Alas, anyone who entered the mist, no matter how powerful, would quickly end up walking out of the mist just a short while later. At first, everyone was quite startled, but after more time passed everyone grew accustomed to it.

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Within the thick mist. Thousands of streams of sword-light were roving about in the air above the boulder at the peak of the mountain, fluctuating and vanishing in an unpredictable manner while being as dominating and exalted as the heavens themselves. At other times, the sword-light transformed into endlessly vast black holes which ground through everything nearby.

The boulder suddenly transformed into human form. A white-robed youth appeared at the peak of the mountain. He raised his head to look into the skies.

“My Dao has been completed.” Ning said in a soft voice.

BOOM! The towering Dao-tree within his body began to grow, rumbling and trembling as its branches and trunk stretched outwards. The branches coiled like the bodies of sinuous dragons, while the trunk grew even thicker. The countless leaves on the tree were all trembling. This towering

Dao-tree was unfathomably stronger than the Dao-trees of ordinary Daolords of the Fourth Step. Clearly, Ning's foundation was far, far more stable than theirs.

The Dao-tree continued to grow taller as well before finally topping out at 540,000 meters. The Dao-tree had finally reached its true, absolute limit in size! The next step would be the Daomerge, which would result in the Dao-tree giving birth to a flower of eternity.

Rumble... the giant pile of chaos jewels continued to crumble apart and shatter as a veritable ocean of energy surged into Ning. His divine body and Immortal energy began to transform and evolve, while his heartworld began its final expansion...

The reason why he completely separated this place off from the rest of the world and elected to absorb energy from chaos jewels rather than from the primordial chaos of the outside world was to prevent anything unexpected from happening! The disturbance which would be caused by Ning drawing upon chaos energy from the outside world in making his breakthrough to the fourth step would definitely shock everyone. News would quickly spread! Moreover, absorbing chaos energy from the primordial chaos was extremely slow. Archon Silksnow or the Aeonians might be able to make it here and attack Ning before he finished his breakthrough!

Archon Silksnow and the Aeonians had been searching for Ning this entire time. At first, Archon Silksnow wasn't sure if Ning was dead or not, but he quickly received word that Ning was actually alive! In truth, this was quite easy to discern; Ning's heartlamp within the Sword Palace of the Twelve Palaces of Brightshore remained lit. This meant that Ning wasn't dead yet! Given how strong Archon Silksnow was, it was very easy for him to befriend a few Daolords of the Brightshore Kingdom and have them help him examine Ning's heartlamp.

Although the Daolords of the Brightshore Kingdom were forbidden from engaging in fratricide, something as minor as inspecting a heartlamp was nothing more than sending a bit of information forward. It didn't count.

“Whew.” Ning stood at the peak of a mountain, a smile on his face. It had only been a short period of time, but the chaos jewels had allowed his divine power and Immortal energy to complete their transformations. He now truly was a Daolord of the Fourth Step in every way, shape, and form! He was now simply accumulating energy from the chaos jewels in order to generate more of the azureflower mist energy and expand his heartworld.

“A short while from now, I’ll have completely transformed. Archon Silksnow and the Aeonians will no longer pose any threat to me.” Ning could sense how his body had changed. With his Omega Sword Dao having reached the fourth stage, his Dao had broken through to a brand new level. Ning himself had been catapulted into a higher level of power.

Ning glanced downwards, his gaze piercing through the mist as he stared at the vast land beneath him. The land was filled with countless ordinary mortals, and Ning was able to see the tiny threads of fate which connected those ordinary mortals together.

“Karma?” Ning nodded slowly. Although he had never trained specifically in the Dao of Karma, anyone who reached a sufficiently high level of insight in any Dao would be able to engage in karmic scrying. Given Ning’s current level of enlightenment, there were now many ‘hidden’ places in the vast universe which could no longer hide from his gaze! If he wished to slay a foe, he could use his sword to follow the threads of karma to slay all of his his foe’s clones and Primaltwin!

In truth Archon Silksnow was able to do this as well, but the problem was that he wasn’t able to rely on his own power to kill Ning; he had to rely on a powerful treasure he had acquired in the Terror Starsea. The power of the treasure was tremendous... but since it didn’t truly belong to him, he could at most control the direction in which the power was released. There was no way he could control it to follow Ning’s karmic threads and kill Ning’s other bodies.

Whoosh. Ning’s body began to move. Whoooooosh. Countless Nings appeared above the mountain peak. He was moving at such an incomprehensible level of speed that ordinary matter wasn’t able to impede him in the slightest; in fact, not even spacetime was able to

impede him! In terms of speed, Ning was definitely superior to the likes of Archon Silksnow by now. He truly had reached an incomprehensible level.

Boom! Ning's body suddenly blasted apart, dissolving into countless motes of light. The light then reformed into a glowing humanoid figure. The glowing humanoid figure then blasted apart, transforming into an endless black fog which drifted away... then suddenly transformed into a stream of water. A while later, the stream of water vanished and a towering inferno replaced it.

"I am the world. The world is me." In the end, the inferno transformed into countless specks of flying sand which reformed into Ning's figure. Ning murmured softly to himself, "Shadowless and traceless, I manifest and disappear as I please. So when the Omega Sword Dao – Shadowless reaches the fourth stage, it can actually produce a terrifying invulnerable form..."

Ning had always envied the other cultivators for their various invulnerable forms. Upon gaining an invulnerable form, it would be difficult for foes to slay you unless the gap in power between you and them was ridiculously large.

For example, Archon Silksnow's invulnerable form made it so that even Hegemon Brightshore would find him difficult to kill. But of course, 'difficult' didn't mean 'impossible'; if Hegemon Brightshore was willing to pay any price, he would still be able to accomplish it. The price, however, would be huge.

"My invulnerable form should be even more perfect than Archon Silksnow's." Ning laughed. His Omega Sword Dao was truly perfect and without flaw. In the past, he didn't have an invulnerable form primarily because he hadn't reached the proper stage of cultivation yet. Not that he had, it was naturally unlocked for him.

Archon Silksnow's Dao of the Saber was offense oriented, and so there was no way he could use his Saber Dao to generate an invulnerable form for himself. This was why he had spent so much time and energy training in the Dao of Snow. The Dao of Snow, the Dao of Light, and other similar

Daos were Daos which could be used to generate invulnerable forms with (relative) ease. Archon Silksnow had used this method to cover up this particular flaw, lowering his overall weaknesses.

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Boom! Ning's heartworld finally expanded to a completely new level as well, causing his massive reserve of heartforce to become even more powerful.

Ning smiled slightly. When his Omega Sword Dao had been at the third stage, his insights into the Dao were already comparable to the insights of 'ordinary' supreme Daolords. The difference was, he was extremely well-rounded and flawless in every aspect, which was why he ranked at the very top of the supreme Daolord ranking.

Now, his Omega Sword Dao had broken through to the fourth stage. In terms of insight, he was at the Archon level... and a highly ranked one at that! This was especially true now that his [Heartsword] art had reached the twelfth stance, which meant that Ning's sword-arts were now six times stronger when using the [Heartsword] art! During his fight against Archon Silksnow, he had only mastered the eleventh stance, but since the eleventh and twelfth stances belonged to the same 'stage', it was very easy to break through from the former to the latter. Ning had already spent 130 million years wandering this mortal world; he naturally was able to break through to a new level during this period of time.

"Given my current Omega Sword Dao and my twelfth stance of the [Heartsword] art... there might be Archons capable of defeating me, but they can probably be counted on one hand." Ning smiled. "Even the three mighty Hegemons... they are worthy of my respect, but I no longer need to live in terror of them."

Ning's protective abilities were far superior to Archon Silksnow's. He had already mastered his own invulnerable form, the Shadowless form. It allowed him to become one with the world and for the world to become one with him. Injuring him would be very, very difficult.

"With this level of power... I now have a chance at acquiring treasures

which are valuable enough to persuade an Autarch to help me out.” Ning was in high spirits. After countless years of cultivation, he had finally reached this new height.

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After becoming a Daolord of the Fourth Step, Ning continued to sit by himself at the peak of the mountain, calmly and quietly training in the secret art known as the [Grand Diffraction Sword]. This was a secret art left behind by the Sword Hegemon, and was a Hegemon-level secret art! Even the current Ning was merely able to master two of the three stages of this art, as he was still at a somewhat lower level of insight than that of a Hegemon. For now, he was unable to master the third stage... and in truth, the third stage required so many treasures that not even a Hegemon would necessarily be able to scrounge up all the items necessary.

Hegemon Welkin, for the sake of training in a Hegemonic secret art, had wandered many realmverses and otherverses in search of the materials he needed... but to this very day, he was still lacking a few items. As a result, Hegemon Welkin had only mastered part of his Hegemonic secret arts!

Truly mastering Hegemonic secret arts was just too difficult. If Ning could master just two of those three stages, he would have reached the same level of power in secret arts as Hegemon Welkin had reached.

# Chapter 5: Ji Ning Appears

Whoosh. Whoosh. Whoosh. Arcs of sword-light flew around Ji Ning in an orderly process while growing increasingly powerful.

The Jindan chaos region inside of Ning's body was currently making use of various treasures to establish a 'sea of diffracted light'. This sea would in turn birth and hold the energy needed for the [Grand Diffraction Sword]. Like the nine novessence arts, this was a type of outside power! However, to train this technique was extremely difficult, requiring an extremely high level of insight into the Dao. Ning was finding it quite laborious and taxing to establish this diffraction sea.

The deeper the sea became, the more powerful his [Grand Diffraction Sword] would become! If he could truly master this Hegemonic secret art, he would be able to beat Archons senseless with casual strikes from it.

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Fortunately, Ning's mastery of the Dao of the Sword had no weaknesses. Although this secret art had high requirements in many different aspects of the Dao of the Sword, Ning was able to slowly master it. After spending over a thousand years, Ning finally finished establishing his diffraction sea. This sea of diffracted light was now more than thirty thousand kilometers wide, signifying that he had mastered the first two stages of the [Grand Diffraction Sword]. The very first stage of this technique was already comparable to the nine novessence arts. The second stage was much more powerful.

Ning rose to his feet, dispelling the mist which had surrounded the mountain for so long, then stared at the world about him. "Now that my secret arts are mastered, it is time to go back."

"Focus." Ning pointed from afar. Instantly, part of his will containing his sword-arts legacy shot out of his finger. Although this wasn't the Omega Sword Dao, it was still something which would allow someone to establish the most stable foundation possible in the Dao of the Sword. It would allow cultivators to walk the path most suitable for them... and in this

realm, where the highest skilled cultivators were merely Celestial Immortals, it would allow practitioners to become invincible with ease.

“I, Darknorth, meditated on the Dao in this place and became a Daolord of the Fourth Step here. It can be said that karma binds us together, and so I have left a fragment of my will. The one who passes my trials and acquires this fragment of my will shall gain my legacy and become my personal disciple, the fourth disciple under my tutelage.” Ning had already set up a number of trials within the mountain with ease. Anyone who came would have to first follow Ning’s trials as he set them up.

If someone wished to breach the trials through raw force? Even supreme Daolords could well die unless they had incredible life-preserving abilities!

Whoosh. Ning took a single step forwards, disappearing from the mountain.

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Although Ning had spent over a hundred million years in seclusion, in truth all of those years had been spent within the Vastheaven Everworld.

Within Vastheaven Palace. As soon as Ning returned to his own residence, Emperor Solesky hurried over to meet him.

“Master.” Just as Su Youji called out in delight, she saw Emperor Solesky fly towards them. She hurriedly bowed: “Greetings, Emperor.”

“Step back for now,” Emperor Solesky instructed.

“Alright.” Although Su Youji was a bit puzzled, she immediately retreated.

After Su Youji left, Emperor Solesky said hurriedly, “Darknorth, why have you come back? I told you to go into hiding and not reveal yourself! Although no one in Vastheaven Palace would leak this information, we still need to be careful. There might be Eternal Emperors scrying on us from outside. If they see that your true body has returned, we’re going to be in serious trouble.”

“No need to worry that much, big brother,” Ning said.

“The situation is extremely grim,” Emperor Solesky explained. “I already told you last time... Archon Silksnow has arranged for many different organizations to track your whereabouts. Some of my friends, however, have told me that someone else just as powerful as Archon Silksnow is also trying to trace your whereabouts. For now, I haven’t been able to find out just who it is, but judging from the amount of manpower he’s been able to move, there’s no question that he’s at least as strong as Archon Silksnow.”

“It is the Aeonians,” Ning explained.

“The Aeonian race?!” Emperor Solesky was shocked.

“They aren’t just searching for me in the Dao Alliance, they are also searching for me in the Brightshore Kingdom,” Ning explained. “Hegemon Brightshore has warned me long ago.”

“Archon Silksnow is famous for being a savage madman. It is ‘normal’ for him to behave in such a frenzied manner... but why are the Aeonians searching for you?” Emperor Solesky was puzzled.

Ning smiled calmly. “Because of a treasure.”

“You aren’t worried at all?” Emperor Solesky was rather flabbergasted.

“Worried? Why should I be worried? They should be the ones to worry.” Ning smiled. He was at a different level of power now, and so he was also in a different state of mind.

He had been weaker than them in the past, and he didn’t have an invulnerable form, nor did he have any powerful protective treasures. He was constantly at risk of dying! Even his Lifeblood Dao-seal had been used up. Of course he had to be in hiding.

Now, he was much stronger and more confident in himself. Why would he fear Archon Silksnow or the Aeonians?

“You...?” Emperor Solesky was rather puzzled.

“Big brother Solesky, I’m planning to pay a visit to the Brightshore Kingdom. After that... I’m planning to attack the Sacred City of Silksnow

and kill Archon Silksnow.” A murderous look flashed through Ning’s eyes. “It’s going to cause a bit of a stir, so I wanted to give you advance notice. No need to worry.”

“You are going to attack the Sacred City of Silksnow and kill Archon Silksnow?!” Emperor Solesky was stunned.

“Well. I might not be able to kill him, but I’ll uproot him and everything he’s ever established.” Ning’s eyes flickered icily. He was going to ‘kill a chicken to frighten off the monkeys’, warning any others that he was not to be messed with. Archon Silksnow was nothing more than a chicken for him to use in this plan!

In the coming days, there would be cases where he would occasionally reveal his strength. This would definitely surprise and puzzle many. Previously, for him to be able to rely on the [Heartsword] art and other art to just barely reach the Archon level was already a freakish display of strength in talent... but it was still within the realm of believability! But when he now revealed an even more terrifying level of power, it would truly stun everyone.

How could a Daolord reach such a level of power? This was completely illogical. It made no sense at all! And yet, it had happened. How? Perhaps the Hegemons and the other ancient cultivators would try to capture Ning and force him to hand over his secrets.

For the sake of personal power, anything and everything was possible. Ning didn’t want to go through all that trouble... and so he was going to go out of his way to show everyone just how hard he could hit! He was going to dominate Archon Silksnow in a display of absolute power! That way, no one would dare to plot against him. Even if they did want to learn some of Ning’s secrets, they wouldn’t make an enemy out of him without a good reason. No one in the Endless Territories, after all, would want to offend someone who could dominate Archon Silksnow!

“Archon Silksnow... you’ve searched for me again and again, unwilling to give up on your plans. Then... I’ll force you to give up, and I’ll make an example out of you in the process!”

“Darknorth, you... you plan to uproot his foundation?” Emperor Solesky could hardly believe it. “He’s one of the eight lords of the Sacred Cities! He’s so legendary for his savagery that he has numerous bloodthirsty Emperors serving as his retainers. All of the Emperors under his command are powerful, and it is said that he has other ancient Archon-level figures who are supporting him from behind. If you are going to act against him, that means you are going to have to fight all of those Emperors!”

“That’s what makes it fun.” Ning smiled. Archon Silksnow was no threat to him at all. He wanted to uproot Archon Silksnow’s entire foundation; that was what would truly stun everyone around.

“Darknorth, you are still just a Daolord!” Emperor Solesky’s anxiety was beginning to transform into rage. “Those Emperors have been around for an unfathomably long period of time, and Archon Silksnow stands at their very peak. He’s not going to be that easy for you to deal with!”

“Big brother.” Ning frowned.

“I know what type of temper you have, and I know that I can’t stop you. Fine. I’ll go with you,” Emperor Solesky said. “I might not be able to kill Archon Silksnow, but I’m skilled in staying alive. I should stand a good chance at fleeing with you in tow.”

Ning shook his head, then stretched his hand and waved a finger. Whoosh. A streak of sword-light appeared in the air, arcing out and brushing past Emperor Solesky. This caused Emperor Solesky’s face to turn pale, and he couldn’t help but tremble.

“B-but...” Emperor Solesky could hardly believe it. Wasn’t his brother just a Daolord? How could he be this powerful?

“Big brother, just wait for the news.” Ning turned and left.

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The Brightshore Kingdom. The Palace of the Sword. A white-robed youth appeared right in front of its main doors and walked towards it.

“Is that...?”

“That’s Palace Lord Darknorth.”

“Isn’t that Palace Lord Darknorth?” The World-level cultivators and black-armored Daolords in front of the Sword Palace all stared in amazement at the white-robed youth who appeared before them. Ever since Ning had shocked everyone with his performance in the Waveshift Realm, he had become acknowledged as the Palace Lord of the Palace of the Sword.

“Greetings, Palace Lord.”

“Palace Lord.” They all bowed respectfully as he walked past, but the black-armored Daolords began to secretly spread the word. Archon Silksnow and the Aeonians were still searching for him, after all.

Soon, word was sent from the Brightshore Kingdom and began to spread out throughout the Endless Territories. Daolord Darknorth had appeared within the Palace of the Sword in the Brightshore Kingdom!

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“He’s finally come out. Hegemon Brightshore was willing to help you out once, but I refuse to believe he’ll help you out a second, third, or fourth time. How could an exalted Hegemon lower himself to helping out a Daolord that many times?” Archon Silksnow immediately grew excited upon hearing this information, and his oily green eyes were filled with murderous malice. “This time... as soon as you leave the Brightshore Kingdom, I’m going to claim your life.”

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“You’ve hidden yourself for quite some time, but now you’ve finally shown yourself. The only thing that little thief is capable of is running around and hiding. If we can find him, we’ll crush him with ease.” Within the Aeonian Kingdom, Emperors Anchen, Islehide, and Duug were filled with the desire to kill as well. They didn’t believe Ning would pose any risk to them at all.

# Chapter 6: Refusal

Ji Ning walked into the Palace of the Sword. All of the cultivators he passed would all address him respectfully as 'Palace Lord' or as 'senior apprentice-brother'. Clearly, Ning's status was supreme amongst those inside the Palace of the Sword.

If Ning revealed his true power? The only person whose status was higher than him in the Brightshore Kingdom would probably be Hegemon Brightshore himself.

"Armaments Gorge." Ning walked through the air to descend up on the building located deep within a gorge. This was Armaments Gorge.

"Palace Lord." The two golems responsible for overseeing Armaments Gorge, 'Swordfive' and 'Swordsix', both called out respectfully.

"Long time no see." Ning smiled.

"A mere billion years or so has passed since you first entered our palace, Palace Lord. And yet, you have now become the preeminent power of the Sword Palace," Swordfive said.

Ning couldn't help but think back to those early years. When he had first entered the Palace of the Sword, he had merely been a World-level cultivator, awed and dazed by what he was seeing. He had been filled with excitement and desire towards cultivation! In the blink of an eye, a billion years had gone by. He now stood amongst those who were at the very apex of power within the Endless Territories. The only ones who were truly stronger than him were the three Hegemons. Who would've ever thought he would rise to such heights?

Ning casually walked into the Armaments Gorge, glancing at the many treasures inside. To the current Ning, they were of very little interest.

"The Halfsword." Ning's gaze fell upon the broken sword lying on the table. An awesome sword-intent emanated from the broken sword which surrounded the area, making it impossible for any cultivator who entered to miss it.

“A Universe treasure.” Ning smiled as he walked over. When he was thirty meters away, an invisible field of energy sought to stop Ning in his tracks. Ning paused momentarily, then easily brushed aside the surge of energy and continued to walk over. He walked next to the table, then looked down upon the broken sword resting upon it.

“I didn’t want to let you get close to me, but you actually forced your way over.” A figure suddenly appeared directly above the broken sword. It was a pink-robed, icy-faced woman.

“Treasure-spirit,” Ning said, “Aren’t you bored by life in Armaments Gorge? Why don’t you accompany me in roving through the outside world. What do you say?”

“So you are now the new Palace Lord of the Palace of the Sword.” The icy-faced woman said coldly, “I remember you from back when you were still just a kid, unable to withstand even my aura. You’ve become fairly powerful, but you are still just a Daolord. Successive generations of Palace Lords have sought me out, but I was not interested in any of them. You can leave now. I will not follow any Daolord.”

Ning was speechless. He had come to the Brightshore Kingdom on serious business; he had only come to visit the Halfsword to try his luck. If he really could acquire a Universe treasure, his power would be increased by quite a significant amount.

“Aren’t you setting your requirements a bit too high?” Ning smirked.

“I’m not interested in ordinary Eternal Emperors either, only in sword cultivators who have at least reached the Archon level. A Hegemon would be even better,” the icy-faced woman said coldly.

“Haha, the entire Flamedragon Realmverse doesn’t even have a single sword-wielding Hegemon.” Ning teased, “And the number of Archons who wield swords can also be counted on one hand. It seems it’ll be quite hard for you to find a new master.”

“Hmph. You are far too weak. Even if you did have a Universe treasure, you’d just end up being easily beaten and losing it to a powerful Eternal Emperor.” The icy-faced woman snickered, “Giving a Universe treasure to

a Daolord is a waste. I heard that someone named Winesage did end up with a Universe treasure. I think that Universe treasure must've been crazy for him to choose to follow a Daolord."

Two streams of sword-light suddenly shot out of Ning's eyes. Boom! Boom! These two streams of sword-light carried an aura of terrifying power which spread out in the area around the Halfsword, but it didn't contain any offensive power to it. All of the treasures within Armaments Gorge were protected by barriers which Hegemon Brightshore himself had set down. The other major powers who had come afterwards had set down barriers as well. It was impossible to take away any of the treasures here by force.

"Your Dao of the Sword...?" The icy-faced woman was stunned. "Y-y-you... how could you have..."

She was a Universe-level sword! Her senses were keenly attuned to the auras of sword cultivators, and she could instantly tell how exquisite Ning's Dao of the Sword was. It had completely surpassed the Daolord level; it was at a level which only some Archons could match.

"Follow me and adventure by my side. You should be able to tell how strong I am; there is no one in the entire Flamedragon Realmverse who can do anything to me." Ning looked at her. "Even if I truly do end up dying one day, you'll just regain your freedom once more. Come adventuring with me. Life here is far too boring and meaningless." Ning was trying to 'seduce' her.

The icy-faced woman hesitated slightly. She actually did want to go out adventuring as well... but her innate pride forced her to let out a cold snort. "Your Sword Dao is excellent, but you are still just a Daolord. If you can succeed in your Daomerge, I'll agree to follow you."

Ning couldn't help but feel speechless. Succeed in his Daomerge? That was incredibly difficult. If he really was able to succeed in the Daomerge and make his Omega Sword Dao eternal... he couldn't even imagine what level he would be at by then. By then, even Universe treasures would probably be of limited use to him.

“Are you sure you don’t want to come out with me?” Ning asked.

“You are just a Daolord.” Clearly, the icy-faced woman wasn’t willing to lower her head.

“Ah, forget it then. It seems that we are not destined to be a match.” Ning turned and left.

The icy-faced woman watched as Ning left, gritting her teeth. A Daolord who had reached such a high level in the Dao of the Sword truly had been quite enticing for her. “Bah. In the end, he is just a Daolord. Once he fails his Daomerge, it will all be over. We’ll talk again once he succeeds in his Daomerge.” The icy-faced woman put Ning out of her mind, returning into the Halfsword.

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Ning flew out of Armaments Gorge, feeling slightly regretful. “Winesage is weaker than me, but he found a Universe treasure willing to follow him... but even now, I’m still unable to take the Halfsword away. Ah, forget it, forget it. Haha.” Ning was fairly relaxed about this. His Northbow swords were lifeblood weapons which also helped him out significantly, after all.

By now, his six Northbow swords and the sword quintessence within them had also evolved alongside Ning reaching the fourth stage with his Omega Sword Dao, giving them an even deeper foundation than before.

“My Northbow swords aren’t THAT much weaker than Universe treasures by now.” Ning transformed into a streak of light, quickly arriving at the peak of a mountain within the Sword Palace. Moments later, an Immortal estate descended upon it.

This was where Ning had resided in the past. Now that he was back, he was going to take up residence here for now. “Help me send word to Hegemon Brightshore. Inform him that Darknorth has a trade he wishes to make,” Ning instructed his servant.

“Yes, Master,” the servant replied.

Within the Immortal estate. Ning was within one of the towers, gazing

down at the beautiful Palace of the Sword while leaning against the railings.

“Darknorth.” A figure suddenly materialized next to him. It was a snow-robed, white-bearded old man with six curved horns on his head.

Ning turned and immediately bowed: “Darknorth greets you, Hegemon.”

Hegemon Brightshore looked at Ning. “You are quite bold. You know that Archon Silksnow and the Aeonians are both searching for you, and yet you dare to show your face here publicly?” Ning didn’t wish for his enemies to know that he had made a breakthrough, and so he was using the [Vitalis] art to modify his aura and ensure that it was identical to before the breakthrough.

“Hegemon, do you know why the Aeonians have been searching for me?” Ning smiled.

“I asked you previously, but you weren’t willing to explain in detail.” Hegemon Brightshore looked at Ning. “Ready to tell me?”

Ning nodded, then waved his hand and produced a fiery fruit within it.

Boom. Boom. Boom. The rumbling aura of the fruit was capable of pervading the hearts and souls of cultivators. Even at his current level, Ning felt his heartrate speed up slightly.

“Is that...?” Hegemon Brightshore’s eyes lit up. “Is that an aeonfruit?”

“Aeonfruit?” Ning was startled. Wasn’t this the mutated omnigeddon bloodfruit which had some of the Autarch’s blood within it?

“It seems you don’t really understand... which makes sense. Aeonfruits are far too rare and far too valuable,” Hegemon Brightshore said.

“Aeonfruits are only available to the Aeonian race! The Aeonians view them to be as important as their very lives, and do not trade them to outsiders unless they have an extremely pressing need. Based on what I know, the Aeonians in a few other realmverses also have access to aeonfruits.”

Ning nodded slightly. Prior to the great war starting, Autarch Bolin had

set up estate-worlds in quite a few realmverses. Most likely, after the battle concluded he had left behind a drop of Autarch's blood within most of those estates for his Aeonians to acquire.

"However... none of the Aeonians in any of those realmverses are willing to trade them," Hegemon Brightshore said. "I've heard of only three instances in which they were willing to trade aeonfruits, and in each case it involved something which the Aeonians were desperate to acquire as soon as possible."

"Is this fruit truly that special?" Ning asked.

"They are fairly similar to omnigeddin bloodfruits, but they are more effective when used to create spirit-pills and medicine. As you are probably aware, a 30% increase in medicinal strength translates into a tenfold increase in value," Hegemon Brightshore said. "A single aeonfruit is generally worth more than twenty omnigeddin bloodfruits. Right... so this means that the Aeonians have been searching for you because of this aeonfruit?"

# Chapter 7: Success

“You stole their aeonfruits?” Hegemon Brightshore asked.

Ji Ning silently mused to himself, “I didn’t just steal their fruit, I uprooted their tree.” Still, Ning didn’t feel much sympathy or guilt towards the Aeonians. This was a race that delighted in devouring cultivators! He really had no idea why Autarch Bolin had created such a race of progeny.

“I wish to trade aeonfruits to you,” Ning said, “But I need certain materials.” As he spoke, he waved his hand. A vast list of characters appeared in the air next to him. These were the materials needed to master the first two stages of the [Lumisword Godwings]. Ning had viewed over three hundred Hegemonic legacies, and from them he had chosen this secret art as being the best match for his [Grand Diffraction Sword] art. He was planning to train in both secret arts at the same time. That way, when he used the Omega Sword Dao – Yin-Yang in the future, he would be able to use them together and further increase the power of this technique.

“The materials you need are all extremely valuable and rare.” Hegemon Brightshore frowned upon seeing them. These were materials for a Hegemonic secret art; of course they were rare!

Ning chortled: “That’s why I’m offering aeonfruits for them.”

“I’ll need half a year,” Hegemon Brightshore said. “I’ll also need fifteen aeonfruits.”

“Alright.” Ning accepted without haggling.

Hegemon Brightshore glanced at Ning, surprised, then laughed: “Darknorth, how many aeonfruits did you take from the Aeonians? They value every single of them highly, but it seems you were able to snatch away fifteen of them with ease. No wonder they are searching for you like crazy.”

“Not that many, actually,” Ning said.

“I have to remind you to be careful. Neither Archon Silksnow nor the

Aeonians are easy enemies to face,” Hegemon Brightshore said. “I promised you to help you out once! If you are willing to trade me more aeonfruits, I’ll help you out a second time for ten more of them.”

Ning blinked. Ruthless. Absolutely ruthless. Ten?! The Aeonians were only able to harvest thirty-six aeonfruits every million chaos cycles. They were only created thanks to an Autarch’s blood!

“Very well.” Ning still smiled and nodded, but he murmured mentally to himself, “Oh, Hegemon... I’m afraid you won’t have that chance any longer. Neither Archon Silksnow nor the Aeonians are of any threat to me.”

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The vast Sacred City of Silksnow was perpetually covered by drifting flakes of snow. At the very top of a towering palace within the city. A skinny, white-robed, white-haired man was standing in front of the railings, his long eyebrows fluttering in the wind. He stared off into the void of space, three Eternal Emperors behind him.

“Hmph.” Archon Silksnow was boiling with killing intent. “I’ve received word that Daolord Darknorth is currently hiding within the Brightshore Kingdom,” Archon Silksnow said coldly. “I don’t know if it is a Primaltwin or if he managed to revive himself somehow, but I’m absolutely not going to let him survive again.”

“He’s probably going to spend quite some time in the Brightshore Kingdom,” the red-haired, red-robed woman said hesitantly.

“There’s no way he’ll hide there forever. Sooner or later, he’ll come out. Daolords only live for 108,000 chaos cycles; he needs to go out adventuring, and he needs to attempt the Daomerge. There’s no way he’ll hide inside forever,” Archon Silksnow said.

“But where would he flee to?” The other Emperors were all hesitating. They felt that trapping Ning was going to be extremely difficult.

Archon Silksnow, however, felt quite confident: “Once he leaves the Brightshore Kingdom, there are two possibilities. The first is that he will

go through one of the three spacetime tunnels as he leaves. The tunnels which Hegemon Brightshore personally established can send him a tremendous distance, and they lead to three different regions. The second possibility is that he'll leave on his own power."

Archon Silksnow smiled coldly. "I'm going to ask the three of you to stand guard in front of those three spacetime tunnel exits. I will personally stand guard outside the Brightshore Kingdom! So long as he dares to exit it, I'll immediately kill him."

"Very well."

"Archon, it'll be easy if you merely wish for us to watch the spacetime tunnel exits, but you'll have to watch over the entire Brightshore Kingdom." The three Emperors all felt rather worried.

"I have my own plans." Archon Silksnow didn't explain in detail. He had that damaged realmship, but it was in good enough shape that it even had a ship-spirit. The realmship was usable, it just wasn't able to cover long distances; in fact, it couldn't even match up to the distance Hegemon Brightshore could teleport through spacetime. Despite that, Archon Silksnow still didn't dare to divulge the fact that he had it. He truly wanted to kill Ning and Ninedust so that he could repair it a bit further.

As soon as he moved close to the Brightshore Kingdom, he would be able to sense Ning's location based on the resonance between the parts. If Ning wanted to slowly fly away... impossible!

"We'll keep watch over the three spacetime tunnels and the area outside the Brightshore Kingdom. Daolord Darknorth... you have nowhere to run." Archon Silksnow narrowed his oily green eyes, cold light flashing from them.

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Ning, however, didn't care at all. Nearly five months went by. Hegemon Brightshore visited quite a few places, finally acquiring all the materials which Ning needed.

Thankfully, Ning had only requested the materials needed for the first

two stages of the [Lumisword Godwings]. If he wanted to fully master it, the materials needed would cost tens of time as much. The entire Flamedragon Realmverse probably didn't have enough; he'd have to go elsewhere to slowly search for it.

"Lumisword Godwings." Ning sat in the lotus position within a flat plains within his estate-world. Above his head hovered an absolutely dazzling pair of golden wings which radiated an aura of incomparable sword-ki.

The wings were spread out revealing countless feathers. Each feather radiated an absolutely staggering amount of power. The wings and the feathers were all formed by sword-light which had taken material form. Within Ning's Jindan chaos region lay the actual golden wings, which were akin to a type of magic treasure. All the precious materials that had been consumed were used to forge this set of wings.

This pair of wings hung there within the Jindan chaos region. As Ning carefully molded and remolded it over and over again, a large number of materials were continuously consumed and transformed into feathers which flew into the wings.

As more time flowed on, the wings began to grow more and more complicated as well as larger in size. Clearly, its power was increasing as well. The Godwings above Ning's head began to glow with absolutely dazzling light. Most likely, ordinary supreme Daolords who saw it would be so terrified their legs would turn to jelly.

The [Grand Diffraction Sword] and the [Lumisword Godwings] were somewhat different in nature. The [Grand Diffraction Sword] was rather unpredictable and ephemeral, almost like the waves of the sea in that it came crashing down upon foes in an endless cycle. Its power was spread out across countless streams of sword-ki. The [Lumisword Godwings], however, focused all of its power into that pair of wings.

The first scattered its power, the second condensed it. This was why Ning had determined that these were the two secret arts which would be most appropriate for him to use in forming his Yin-Yang Chaosworld.

“It truly is complicated. It really does require an extremely high level of insight into the Dao of the Sword.” This was an extremely complicated secret art. Ning had spent over thirty thousand years training in it... and if one factored in his usage of a temporal acceleration treasure, he had actually spent over three million years before succeeding! The complexity of this secret art was self-evident.

Whoosh! Whoosh! Up above the sea of diffracted light within Ning’s Jindan chaos region, a simple yet beautiful golden pair of golden wings could be seen flying about. Its power was now completely restrained and reserved, unlike before when it was plainly visible.

“I’ve finally mastered it. I’ve now mastered both of my secret arts; the [Grand Diffraction Sword] and the [Lumisword Godwings].” Ning revealed a look of delight.

“Time to test out their power.” Ning stood there on the plains, staring into the empty skies. With but a thought from him, a large amount of power began to flood out of his body and form a pair of golden wings in the air. The wings were absolutely dazzling, a veritable work of art, but they didn’t emanate any sword-ki at all.

A moment later, yet another flood of power surged out of his body. This time, a large amount of arcing sword-light appeared. Soon, the countless arcs of sword-light completely filled an area of tens of thousands of kilometers around Ning. They swept through each other, sometimes merging together and sometimes bouncing off each other as they flew about. As for the golden wings, they flew within this storm of sword-light with incredible speed. The golden wings flew more than ten times faster than Ning himself could fly. This was a level of speed which one could not achieve through ordinary movement alone.

Swish. Swish. Swish. The golden wings seemed to be present everywhere within the region. They were absolutely beautiful, yet also simple and plain without emanating the slightest hint of sword-ki at all. As they flew, however, they cut through everything in their path. It was so powerful that even Ning himself was a bit shocked by them.

“Yin-Yang Chaosworld.” Ning immediately controlled the two secret arts together, mixing Yin and Yang to manifest a world of his Sword Dao!

BOOM! The golden wings were like an exalted emperor, flying through every part of the region with abandon. Wherever they appeared, countless streams of arced sword-light surrounded them, and the two seemed to form a natural, perfect whole.

“If I then combine my Yin-Yang Chaosworld with my heartworld projection... any foes would probably be scared senseless even before I personally attacked! With this technique at my disposal, I’m no longer vulnerable to group attacks, no matter how many come at me!” Ning was quite delighted. His nine novessence arts actually hadn’t been a very good fit for his Omega Sword Dao – Yin-Yang, as they had been primarily elemental in nature. Using secret arts based on the Dao of the Sword was the most appropriate choice! As for the two secret arts Ning chose, one just so happened to be Yin-attribute while the other was Yang-attribute.

“Now that I’ve mastered my secret arts... it is time to attack.” That very day, Ning put away his Immortal estate. Then, under the watchful gazes of all the cultivators of the Sword Palace, he left by himself.

# Chapter 8: Emperor Nightwell

“Palace Lord Darknorth.”

“Palace Lord.”

The various cultivators of the Twelve Kingdoms who Ji Ning passed by all called out to him with great respect. Soon, Ning reached the spacetime tunnels. Ning chose one of the three tunnels, then entered it and disappeared without a trace.

“Daolord Darknorth has already headed out. He’s heading towards the Flydust Star.” Some of the black-armored Daolords as well as the other cultivators began to spread the word. They didn’t know who was actually seeking this information, but given that Archon Silksnow and the Aeonians were both searching for Ning, they were naturally able to use the many channels available for them to accurately and quickly track Ning’s whereabouts.

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In the void outside the Brightshore Kingdom. Archon Silksnow was standing guard, his white eyebrows fluttering. Suddenly, a hint of surprise appeared on his cold face. “The spacetime tunnel which Daolord Darknorth chose is actually the one which exits the closest to Silksnow City? Hmph... how clever. He intentionally chose the one which no one else would’ve suspected. Unfortunately for him, I’ve arranged for an Emperor to watch over all three of the exits!”

“Brother Nightwell, Daolord Darknorth is about to appear at the Flydust Star. All you need to do is to tie him down for a period of time. I’m heading out immediately.” Archon Silksnow immediately began to issue orders.

“Don’t worry, Archon!” Emperor Nightwell was filled with confidence in himself. All of them belonged to the Sacred City of Silksnow, and they all had avatars back home within the city. As a result, the avatars were able to instantly communicate with each other.

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Flydust Star had once been an ordinary, desolate star. Ever since Hegemon Brightshore had set up his stable spacetime tunnels, it had become one of the three tunnel exits. As a result, it naturally became quite a special place. This area was now protected by ancient and powerful barriers, and there were black-armored Daolords as well as more powerful Daolords protecting it.

“Daolord Darknorth?” A pudgy old man was in the chaotic void outside Flydust Star. He had strange white skin and was extremely fat, and he was dressed in loose robes. He had a pair of soft horns growing out of his forehead, and a pair of corrosive-looking eyes that gleamed almost like the cold eyes of a viper. This pudgy, snowy-skinned old man was Emperor Nightwell, famous for his savagery.

Archon Silksnow could be described as ‘evil and brutal’ in an open and visible manner. Emperor Nightwell, by contrast, was ‘insidious and cruel’ in a shadowy manner. His reputation was absolutely terrible, and everyone knew him to be a truly maleficent man. Even other Emperors had once pursued him and attempted to kill him. Once Archon Silksnow had risen to power, he immediately had Emperor Nightwell join him as a subordinate. Many savage and cruel Emperors had done the same, and they had joined together and then taken over one of the Sacred Cities. They were so strong that their organization was quite difficult to dislodge.

Although evil and brutal cultivators were often hated, there was no way to truly wipe them all out. Now that they had Archon Silksnow as their leader and other ancient monsters supporting them in secret, they became an extremely formidable force.

“There he comes.” Emperor Nightwell’s gaze was focused upon the tunnel exit at Flydust Star. He watched as a white-robed youth with a black sheath on his back suddenly emerged.

“According to what the Archon said, Darknorth should’ve reached the Archon level of power and is just slightly weaker than him. Not even the Archon was able to kill him; he had to rely on a treasure.” Although

Emperor Nightwell held Daolords in disdain, he didn't dare to underestimate Daolord Darknorth too much. The man was probably significantly more powerful than him, after all.

"All I need to do is to slow him down as much as I can and make sure he doesn't break free." Emperor Nightwell felt quite confident in his chances.

Whoosh. Ji Ning appeared in the void above the Flydust Star, then quickly flew out of it.

"Eh?" Ning suddenly slowed down, frowning as he stared off into the distance at the pudgy, bizarrely white-skinned old man who had suddenly appeared before him. "Emperor Nightwell?" Ning recognized the man.

"I didn't expect you to know of me, Daolord Darknorth. I'm flattered and honored." Emperor Nightwell's eyes crinkled as he beamed mirthfully. "I imagine you know why I am here, Daolord Darknorth. I've been standing guard in this place because I wish to invite you, Daolord Darknorth, to come pay a visit to the Sacred City of Silksnow. Our Archon truly wishes to meet with you."

"Invite me?" Ning smiled coldly. "Very well. Lead the way."

"If I'm up ahead leading the way... what if you suddenly run off, Daolord Darknorth? Wouldn't that be troublesome? I think you should enter my estate-world. That way, we can move more quickly and more conveniently." Emperor Nightwell continued to beam at Ning.

Ning had already decided that he was going to uproot Archon Silksnow's entire organization! He had naturally done his research on the Emperors belonging to the Sacred City of Silksnow. Aside from a few reclusive old fellows who were hard to find information about, Ning had essentially gotten full reports on almost all of them. As for Emperor Nightwell... this pudgy, bizarrely white-skinned old man was rotten to the core.

Of the Emperors belonging to the Sacred City of Silksnow who Ning was planning to kill, Emperor Nightwell definitely ranked in the top three.

"If I enter your estate-world, my life would be in your hands." Ning shook his head. "Pardon me for not obliging."

“Daolord Darknorth... given the situation, do you really think you’ll be able to escape?” Emperor Nightwell’s eyes flashed with cold light.

“Escape from who? You?” Ning chuckled.

“I might not be able to beat you, Daolord Darknorth, but you can forget about escaping.” Emperor Nightwell smiled. The reason why Archon Silksnow had chosen the three of them was because they were highly skilled at tying down opponents.

Ning suddenly said in a soft voice, “I’ve heard, Emperor Nightwell, that for the sake of training your self-created [Nightwell] secret art, you slaughtered every single infant within a total of 381 territories.”

“They were nothing more than infants. More are being produced every day,” Emperor Nightwell said softly.

“Hegemon Brightshore is a Chaos Godbeast. Hegemon Netherlily is an Ancient. Hegemon Windrain is an Aberrant. None of them had parents, as all three were born from the primordial chaos.” Ning said softly, “But I, however, was born in the mortal world and slowly trained my way up. When I see someone like you, who used the lives of little babies to master your secret arts, I have only one thought in my mind... to kill you! I was worried about being unable to find you, but you actually delivered yourself right to my doorstep.”

There were many evil cultivators who used babies to train in secret arts or divine abilities; infant placenta, for example, was used in countless evil techniques. This was because newborn infants represented the genesis of new life; they were filled with tremendous vitality and infinite potential.

Ning was filled with the utmost of loathing for these types of cultivators. Whenever he encountered one, his response could be summarized in one word: Kill!

“Ahahaha! There are plenty who wish to kill me, even amongst Eternal Emperors... but so what? I’m still doing perfectly fine.” Emperor Nightwell roared with laughter, his deep Immortal energy causing his laughter to echo throughout the chaotic void around them. “There are only a few who can actually kill me, and I stay the hell away from them. As for you?

Daolord Darknorth, you are still just a Daolord. You, kill me? Hah! Archon Silksnow himself isn't able to kill me, but you think you can? Haha..."

Emperor Nightwell similarly detested people like Ning who wished to kill him just because he was 'evil'.

Snick. Snick. Snick...

Ning's six Northbow swords simultaneously flew out of their sheaths. Ning manifested three heads and six arms, holding all six Northbow swords at the ready.

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"Daolord Darknorth is standing right in front of me, and he's actually going to attack me. Don't worry, Archon; there's no way I'll let him escape." Emperor Nightwell sent word to Archon Silksnow while immediately executing his legendary [Nightwell] secret art.

Rumble... his bizarrely white skin suddenly extended in every direction like a giant sack, with the opening of the sack aimed directly at Ning and sending a surge of sucking power straight towards him. Inside the giant white sack, only endless darkness could be seen.

Ning held all six Northbow swords as he quietly watched his opponent charge towards him. The giant white sack quickly flew towards Ning, seeking to swallow him within the opening. An enormous, hideous face suddenly appeared at the opening as well. This was Emperor Nightwell's face, and that face opened its giant mouth, the teeth glistening like a hell of countless knives as he bit down towards Ning, seeking to swallow Ning whole.

"You can die now." Ning showed no mercy at all.

BOOM! A pair of dazzling wings suddenly appeared in the air above Ning. At the same time, countless arcs of sword-light appeared as well around Ning. The two instantly combined to form an enormous Yin-Yang Chaosworld which completely trapped the giant sack within it.

Rumble... a titanic heartworld projection came descending as well. The heartworld projection had mountains, rivers, lakes, grasslands, and

prairies that could be seen with clarity. The giant 'sword mountain' at the very center caused a particularly strong sense of awe and dread. The heartworld projection merged together with the Yin-Yang Chaosworld perfectly.

Slash! Slash! Slash! The white sack was instantly torn asunder.

"How is this possible?" Emperor Nightwell reappeared in his original form, but faced by the double dangers of the Yin-Yang Chaosworld and the heartworld projection, he only felt a sense of tremendous fear.

# Chapter 9: Slain

Prior to accepting this mission, Archon Silksnow had gotten a clear understanding of Ji Ning's strength. An old, insidious fellow like him would naturally memorize everything. He had never dared to show the slightest bit of overconfidence; if he had, he wouldn't have been able to survive all these years! But no matter how careful he had been, he had never imagined that Daolord Darknorth's secret arts alone would have reached such a terrifying level of power.

He had never encountered such powerful secret arts or such a powerful heartworld projection before! In fact... he felt that it was highly likely that there were no Archons whose secret arts could match up to Daolord Darknorth, even if he factored in all of those old freaks who had gone into seclusion! Even if there were some who were a match, there were only three at most!

Whoosh. Faced with such a terrifying Sword Dao world, Emperor Nightwell was unable to maintain his divine body. He immediately transformed an inky-black mist that was filled with vileness and which immediately began to flee. This was Emperor Nightwell's invulnerable form, and the reason why he had been able to survive for so long.

"I need to escape." He immediately moved to tear through spacetime as he fled. "...What's going on?! Why can't I escape?" He could sense that spacetime around him had been completely locked down. What he didn't know was that Ning's Omega Sword Dao had allowed him to easily tear through spacetime, even at the third stage. Now that Ning had reached the fourth stage, his Omega Sword Dao – Yin-Yang gave him tremendously powerful control over spacetime, allowing him to completely suppress it. Only someone whose Dao surpassed Ning's in this regard would be able to tear through spacetime; no one else would.

To surpass Ning? Perhaps only a Hegemon could accomplish it.

"My treasures." Emperor Nightwell immediately sought to try and activate his treasures meant for fleeing... but it was too late.

“Exterminate.” Ning transformed into a streak of light that charged straight towards Emperor Nightwell. At the same time, he executed his [Heartforce Eradicator] technique.

Whoosh. The soundless [Heartforce Eradicator] instantly sliced through the void and struck against the fleeing black mist.

“Ahhh!” Emperor Nightwell could sense the terrifying, eradicating will collide straight against his soul and truesoul. Ning’s current heartforce was on a completely different level of power than before. There was likely no way that an ordinary supreme Daolord would be able to resist it. However, Emperor Nightwell was someone who had relied on vile techniques to become an Eternal Emperor and had been alive for an extremely long period of time. As a result, his Dao-heart was extremely powerful and he was able to completely endure Ning’s strike.

Whoosh. The [Heartforce Eradicator] was immediately followed by the [Dreamstar] art! This time, Emperor Nightwell wasn’t able to endure the attack and he was drawn into an illusory world.

The frantically fleeing black mist suddenly slowed down dramatically, and the mist even began to slowly condense. Clearly, Emperor Nightwell’s mind had been swept into the illusions. Without his mind controlling his invulnerable form, it began to slowly disperse.

“Die.” By now, Ning had already caught up, and he showed no mercy at all as he delivered a fatal strike with all six of his Northbow swords.

Omega Sword Dao – Heavenbreaker.

Heartsword, stance twelve – Swordtide!

Each of Ning’s swords truly did seem like a tidal wave of power, like a detonating volcano. The strikes rumbled through the black mist... and right at this lethally dangerous moment, Emperor Nightwell’s strong Dao-heart finally allowed him to break free of the illusions.

“What’s go-” In the exact instant that he broke free from the illusions and regained his clarity of mind, Emperor Nightwell saw the six terrifying sword-tsunamis sweep towards him.

Emperor Nightwell instantly felt despair, and his invulnerable form began to break apart under the terrifying attack. Before he regained consciousness, he had already lost a total of 30% of his invulnerable form! Now, he had regained consciousness, true... but though he strove to defend, he realized that he was completely unable to resist this killer attack.

“Emperor... you lied to me. You said he’s slightly weaker than you? He’s far more powerful than you are! Not even my invulnerable form can endure his strikes. He’s definitely at the level of a supreme Archon. Most likely, only the two leaders of the Dao Alliance are on par with him.” Emperor Nightwell felt despair. He was completely unable to defend against this type of sword-stance, and his invulnerable form was unable to ablate enough of the attack power. It was simply beyond what he could endure.

It was much like how Ninedust’s invulnerable form would only be able to protect him against ten or so strikes from Archon Silksnow before Ninedust would perish. Emperor Nightwell’s invulnerable form was a bit better than Ninedust’s, but those six strikes Ning had just unleashed... they were simply terrifying. Emperor Nightwell wasn’t able to resist them at all.

Whoosh.

This all took time to describe, but in reality Ning struck with incredible speed. The six sword-tusnamis swept through the black mist, completely annihilating it. Emperor Nightwell continued to struggle in the face of death, but it was to no avail. He was completely eradicated.

Emperor Nightwell, a legendary demon who had lived for countless years, died just like that by Ji Ning’s hands! He became the first person to lose his life as Ning revealed his true brilliance to the universe.

“Hmph.” The swords flew back into the sheath, completely clean and unstained. Everything was calm once more, and everything had vanished. The only one left behind was the white-robed Ning.

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“What’s going on?”

“What in the world was that enormous world of sword-light?” The Daolords responsible for watching over the tunnel exit at Flydust Star had all raised their heads to watch the great battle in the skies. They had all seen Ning run into Emperor Nightwell in the void, followed by a battle beginning. As for exactly what had happened in the battle, they weren’t able to see any of it with clarity. They only saw the countless streaks of sword-light generated by the enormous Yin-Yang Chaosworld.

A short while later, the world of sword-light disappeared... and Emperor Nightwell had disappeared with it. Only the white-robed Ning was left.

“Time to go.” Ning tore through spacetime and departed.

“Where’s Emperor Nightwell?”

“I saw Emperor Nightwell just a few seconds ago. Why has he suddenly vanished?”

“Could Emperor Nightwell have been defeated?”

“Yes, that must be it. He was probably defeated and knew that he couldn’t beat Darknorth, and so he immediately fled.” This was what the Daolords of Flydust Star believed. None of them dared to believe that Emperor Nightwell had been slain. Emperor Nightwell had been alive for far, far too long after all. To slay an old fellow like him would be far too difficult. Most likely, only the few who truly stood at the peak of power in the Endless Territories had a chance to kill him.

However... in truth, Ning already stood at the true peak of power in the Endless Territories. He was already a match for the two leaders of the Dao Alliance.

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Within a palace inside the Sacred City of Silksnow. Four figures were seated around a table here. These were the avatars of Emperor Silksnow and the three Emperors he had sent off on this mission! Their avatars were gathered here so they could instantly communicate with each other.

“Brother Nightwell, all you need to do is tie him down for a time.” Archon Silksnow’s avatar was quite relaxed and at ease.

“Haha, easy.” Emperor Nightwell’s avatar laughed as well. A heartbeat later, Emperor Nightwell’s face turned pale.

“What’s wrong?” Archon Silksnow and the others were startled.

“He...” Emperor Nightwell’s avatar began to speak, but his eyes then turned cloudy and distant as he entered a dazed state. Clearly, he had just been trapped within Ning’s [Dreamdust] illusions. Moments later, Emperor Nightwell regained his clarity of mind. A look of terror and hatred appeared on his face as he cast Archon Silksnow a venomous glance and growled, “You lied-”

But before his words were finished, his aura completely vanished. The death of the true body resulted in the death of the avatar as well. Emperor Nightwell’s avatar slumped over to one side, falling from his chair onto the ground. This caused Archon Silksnow and the other two Emperors to turn pale.

“He DIED?!” Archon Silksnow was stunned.

“How is this possible? How could Emperor Nightwell have died?!” The other two Emperors had turned pale as well. Emperor Nightwell had been alive for far too long; he had already been an Emperor for many, many years back when Archon Silksnow had attempted his Daomerge. An old fellow like him certainly had many powerful life-preserving abilities... but he actually died, just like that? At the hands of a Daolord?

Archon Silksnow had an ugly look on his face. After a few moments of silence, he said, “Brother Nightwell was momentarily dazed. He probably fell to an illusion! Most likely, after he recovered he didn’t have enough time to activate his invulnerable form before Ji Ning slew him.”

“Agreed.” The other two Emperors nodded. Neither of them could believe that Emperor Nightwell would be slain while his invulnerable form was active. In addition, they saw for themselves that Emperor Nightwell had indeed fallen to an illusion.

“No matter what... the end result was that Emperor Nightwell died,” the red-robed, red-haired woman said softly. Utter silence met her words.

True... he had died. The exalted Emperor Nightwell had died, just like that. Died by the hands of a Daolord.

“His illusions are actually as strong as this?” Archon Silksnow murmured softly, “Last time, when we fought, he shouldn’t have been this strong... could he have come up with an even more profound illusion technique?” Daolord Featherdress’ [Featherdress Soulthrall Melody], for example, would’ve been capable of affecting Emperor Nightwell. Ning’s illusions weren’t actually that profound, but his heartworld had reached a far higher level and so his illusions had become much more powerful than before.

“I’m going to head to the Flydust Star right away.” Archon Silksnow’s oily green eyes flashed with fierce light. “I won’t let him escape.”

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Whoosh.

Archon Silksnow was so enraged that he immediately used his battered realmship, using it to fly straight to the Flydust Star.

“Where? Where is he?!” The skinny, snowy-robed old man’s white eyebrows fluttered as he scanned the surrounding void with his oily green eyes. “Where is Daolord Darknorth? Why can’t I sense him?”

“Did he flee? You slew Emperor Nightwell. There’s no way I’ll let you escape!” Archon Silksnow was burning with rage... but he had no idea that after slaying Emperor Nightwell, Ning had immediately flown towards the Sacred City of Silksnow at maximum speed!

# Chapter 10: Descending Upon Silksnow City

The Sacred City of Silksnow was an extremely beautiful place.

“How beautiful.” Two Daolords were flying side-by-side, staring at Silksnow City from afar. The entire Sacred City was composed of countless palaces and estates that were connected to each other, each built atop a cloud. It truly was surpassingly beautiful. In addition, Silksnow City was perpetually covered by countless drifting snowflakes, giving it a pristine and holy appearance.

“Big brother Ironshow, didn’t you say that Silksnow City is one of the eight Sacred Cities and is governed by the bloodthirsty Silksnow Fiend Palace? The disciples of Silksnow Fiend Palace are all incredibly evil and demonic in nature. All of them are tremendous sinners... is it really possible that these demons are in charge of this beautiful Sacred City?” the young violet-robed Daolord transmitted mentally.

“Haha, nothing can be judged by appearances!” The muscular and heavily armored Daolord Ironshow laughed as he responded mentally, “Silksnow Fiend Palace is indeed an extremely evil sect, but this is still their home, one of the eight Sacred Cities of the Dao Alliance. They naturally have to take good care of it! Look at the snow. It looks beautiful as it drifts through the air, right? But amongst cultivators, there is a legend that every single one of the snowflakes drifting through Silksnow City was formed from the blood of countless murdered victims...”

The violet-robed youth glanced at the beautiful snow drifting through the skies. When he thought of how they were formed by endless amounts of blood, his face couldn’t help but pale slightly.

“Violetflame, you are a new Daolord. This is your first visit to a Sacred City.” Daolord Ironshow continued to fly forwards while pointing from afar: “I’ll explain some of the rules of the Sacred City to you. Look at those palaces over there. Whenever you are within an area covered by those barriers, all violence and combat is forbidden no matter how strong you

are. If you do attack someone, that means you are challenging the authority of the Dao Alliance... and challenging the authority of Silksnow Fiend Palace! As the rulers of this Sacred City, they'll send a large number of major powers to slay any who violate the laws."

The violet-robed youth hurriedly nodded upon hearing this.

"Thus... the Sacred Cities are quite safe. Many Daolords have set up residence in them and engage in secluded meditation, because not even Eternal Emperors would dare to break the rules," Daolord Ironshow said.

"Got it." The youth nodded again. Break the rules? Challenge Silksnow Fiend Palace? Provoke the Dao alliance? How would a new Daolord like himself even dare to imagine such a thing?

Outside of the barriers surrounding the palaces, everything is fair game," Daolord Ironshow said. "That's why we have to be careful."

"I'll just keep following you, big brother Ironshow," the violet-robed Daolord said. He then asked curiously, "Have there ever been any major powers who have started a fight within a Sacred City and broken its rules?"

"The three legendary Hegemons would definitely dare to do such a thing," Daolord Ironshow said, "And the Dao Alliance does have internal struggles! The Dao Alliance is simply far too vast, which is why there is quite a bit of combat amongst its most powerful member organizations. Archon Silksnow is legendary for how many he has massacred and slaughtered, and a large number of Emperors belonging to the Dao Alliance have died by his hand. It was slaughter and murder which gave him his current position and the right to rule over this Sacred City. He even renamed it 'Silksnow City' after himself!"

The eight Sacred Cities all had extremely long histories. Every so often, their rulers would change. For example, prior to Archon Silksnow succeeding in his Daomerge, this city had been ruled by a different organization and had a different name. Archon Silksnow's rise to power resulted in many great sinners following him, giving him a powerful organization of his own. As a result, he was able to take control over this

Sacred City.

“Big brother Ironshow, look! Quick!” The violet-robed youth’s face turned pale as he pointed off into the distance. Puzzled, Daolord Ironshow followed his gaze.

They watched from afar as an inky-black tear in space appeared. A white-robed youth bearing a black sheath on his back emerged from the spatial tear. The youth stared off into the distance, scanning the area with his gaze. As he did so, a surge of terrifying power and presence descended upon the region. It was an enormous heartworld projection, and it instantly crashed down upon the entire Sacred City of Silksnow.

“B-but...” The violet-robed youth and Daolord Ironshow both turned ashen. When they looked at the heartworld projection around them, they felt a sense of terror that came from the innermost depths of their souls.

The power of the heartworld projection had yet to be truly unleashed, but even so it was enough to inspire terror in them. If it was unleashed... they knew that they would be instantly annihilated.

Their senses were correct! Given how strong Ji Ning’s heartworld projection had become, even Eternal Emperors would turn pale before its might, to say nothing of Daolords.

“Who?!”

“Who dares to suppress the Sacred City!?”

“Who dares to challenge us, the Silksnow Fiend Palace?!” The Fiend Palace was located in one particular corner of Silksnow City, and auras of tremendous power instantly shot into the skies as various figures began to fly out. The leader was Archon Silksnow’s avatar! Behind him were the other Emperors. Some of the Emperors were here in person, some had their avatars present. In total, an awe-inspiring process of over twenty Emperors had gathered together. This was a terrifying array.

“Silksnow!” the white-robed youth called out icily, his voice shaking the heavens and the earth.

“What’s going on?”

“What is this?”

“Why have so many Emperors appeared?” The many Daolords who were in secluded meditation within their personal estate all emerged, as did the various attendants, Daolords, and weaker World-level cultivators who were within some of the public palaces. They all raised their heads, stunned and curious, to see what was happening afar. Most likely, this was something which they would never see again.

A white-robed youth was facing off against twenty-plus Eternal Emperors led by Archon Silksnow. The two sides gazed at each other from afar.

“Big brother Ironshow, d-didn’t you just say... that this place is very safe? That only the thre Hegemons and the most elite organizations within the Dao Alliance would dare to challenge Silksnow Fiend Palace?” The violet-robed youth was rather dazed.

“There are very few who dare challenge them... but that doesn’t mean there are none.” Daolord Ironshow was rather shocked as well. He hurriedly pulled his brother away and hid within one of the nearby palaces that was within the area protected by the barriers. “Let’s hide for now. We’ll be finished if we get caught up in a battle between major powers like them.”

“Right, right.” The violet-robed youth nodded repeatedly, but a look of excitement was in his eyes.

“Hey... isn’t that white-robed youth Daolord Darknorth?” A voice rang out from nearby. It was one of the other watching Daolords.

“Oh, right!” Daolord Ironshow was stunned and puzzled as he stared from afar. “He looks identical to the figure I saw in the intelligence report I purchased. That white-robed youth is Daolord Darknorth! How is it that he dares to challenge the Silksnow Fiend Palace? No matter how powerful a Daolord is, he’s not even close to being a match for the Archons of the Sacred Cities. T-this makes no sense at all.”

“Big brother Ironshow, is that guy over there really Daolord Darknorth?” the violet-robed youth asked curiously.

“From his appearance, he should be... but it doesn’t make sense for Daolord Darknorth to challenge the entire Silksnow Fiend Palace.” Daolord Ironshow was puzzled. “I really can’t be sure if that is actually Daolord Darknorth at all.” But right at that moment...

“Darknorth, you really are suicidal.” The leader of that distant group of Eternal Emperors, Archon Silksnow, spoke out in a booming voice that echoed in the world. All of the countless puzzled cultivators within Silksnow City instantly realized that the white-robed youth was in fact the legendary ‘Daolord Darknorth’.

“He’s incredible! A Daolord actually dares to challenge all of Silksnow Fiend Palace in such a dominating manner? They are one of the eight organizations which rule over the Sacred Cities!”

“Daolord Darknorth?”

“He’s absolutely incredible.”

“What a bold man! Even if he ends up being defeated, I’ll still feel nothing but admiration for him.” Countless cultivators sighed in shock and awe, and many of them naturally sided with Ning. This was because no matter how much they trained, for them to become Eternal Emperors was an almost hopelessly impossible task. They would at most become Daolords of the fourth Step... and so they felt absolutely exhilarated that a Daolord like them would dare to challenge Silksnow Fiend Palace. Sheer pleasure coursed through their veins at the very thought.

Yes, we Daolords might be weak! But the strongest of us, the strongest Daolords, still dare to challenge even one of the eight rulers of the Sacred Cities!

The countless watching cultivators all mentally supported Ning. However... they all believed that Daolord Darknorth had no chance to actually win. Even his chances to survive this would be extremely slim.

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Ning had travelled here at maximum speed. Given his high level of insight into the Dao, he was able to tear through even greater distances

through spacetime. Finally, he reached the Sacred City of Silksnow... and he had immediately unleashed his heartworld projection without hesitation. He wanted to immediately make a show of strength! Instantly, an entire host of Eternal Emperors had come flying out. He counted a total of twenty-six of them! However, Ning could sense that most were merely avatars. Even the leader, Archon Silksnow, was merely an avatar.

“Silksnow,” Ning called out.

In front of the awesome, distant group of Eternal Emperors standing in midair was their leader, Archon Silksnow. Silksnow, however, was in a rather dazed state of disbelief. He couldn't believe that Ning had come to his headquarters to attack him. Was the man suicidal? Moments later, the Archon let out a laugh: “Darknorth, you really are suicidal.”

“If you think you can kill me, come and try.” Ning swept his gaze across the group of Eternal Emperors, each of them flaring out their auras mightily. Ning smiled. “Do you plan to all come at once? That's fine as well. It'll be fun for me to beat all twenty-six of you Emperors at once.”

# Chapter 11: Inexplicable

Ji Ning's heartworld projection covered the entire Sacred City, and so his voice naturally echoed throughout every part of it.

In truth, Silksnow Fiend Palace wanted to contain and minimize this disturbance as much as possible. Just the very fact that Daolord Darknorth dared to so flagrantly attack them was already a loss of face, even though they would kill him in the end. They naturally wanted fewer people to know about this matter! Alas, as soon as Ning's heartworld projection descended they knew that there was no way to keep this secret.

Ning, however, wanted to 'kill a chicken to scare the monkeys' in a display of force. He wanted to let everyone know just how powerful he had become. Naturally, there was no need to keep anything secret.

"Absolutely dominating."

"This is exhilarating! Just listening to him talk makes me excited. Will I ever reach a level where I would dare to stand in front of over twenty Eternal Emperors and tell them that I'll fight them by myself? If I can ever have such a crowning moment of glory, even dying away the next instant would be worth it."

"There's never been a Daolord this powerful before, right?"

The countless cultivators within the Sacred City all felt their blood begin to boil with excitement when they heard Ning's words. They all felt that for a Samsara Daolord to be able to act like Ning just did was simply incredible. Anything would be worth it.

"Daolord Darknorth has actually attacked the Sacred City of Silksnow. He's facing off against twenty-six Emperors from Silksnow Fiend Palace."

"The battle is about to start right away."

"This is probably the last fight Daolord Darknorth will ever be in. He's probably going to die here."

"Move, move, MOVE! If you don't get here in time, you won't be able to see this battle." Word quickly spread out. News of this incredible event

almost instantly spread throughout the most elite organizations within the Endless Territories.

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“What?!” Hegemon Brightshore was shocked as well when he heard this. “He actually attacked Silksnow Fiend Palace? He’s a Daolord! What gives him this sort of courage?”

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“He’s actually attacked Silksnow Fiend Palace?” Emperor Anchen and the other Emperors of the Aeonians were shocked as well. They had been frantically searching for traces of Ning, wanting to kill him and take back that unique omnigeddon bloodfruit tree. “Daolord Darknorth... what the hell is wrong with him? Has he lost his mind? Or does he have some special item he’s planning to rely on? But he’s still just a Daolord, and he’s facing off against one of the eight Sacred Cities!”

“Let’s go, quick! We’re going to go watch.”

“I’m heading off right now.” Emperor Islehide immediately prepared for departure.

“My avatar will accompany with you. I want to see with my own eyes what this Daolord Darknorth character is up to.” Although Emperor Anchen had always stood guard over the Aeonian Kingdom, even he elected to send his avatar off to watch this fight.

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News quickly spread throughout the Endless Territories. The three mighty Hegemons, some of the more famous Emperors, and some of the reclusive, lesser-known Emperors all grew curious and began to hasten towards Silksnow City. No one had ever heard of any Daolord ever daring to challenge one of the eight Sacred Cities; this was something that had never happened in all of history! Curious, they all hurried to the scene of battle. Alas, the distance was quite great; to actually get there would take some time.

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“Quite bold, audaciously so. Do you really think that you merit all of us Emperors working together to kill you?” Instantly, a droopy-browed and ugly-looking Emperor began to shout at Ning.

“He doesn’t know his own limits.”

“He wants to die under our combined might? In his dreams.” These ancient Eternal Emperors all stared at the distant white-robed youth with disdain.

If they joined forces, even if they killed Ning they would have gained no face. For Emperors with eternal lifespans, face was of paramount importance.

“Even if you want to die, you still aren’t worthy of twenty-six Emperors doing the honors together,” Archon Silksnow laughed coldly. He glanced backwards at an Emperor who had a pair of black wings on his back and sent mentally, “Brother Blackrot, Emperor Nightwell died by the hands of Daolord Darknorth. Daolord Darknorth is extremely strong, just slightly weaker than myself. His illusions are particularly powerful; Emperor Nightwell died because he fell to Darknorth’s illusions. You were born with tremendous skill over illusions; you shouldn’t be susceptible to his heartforce illusions. You go first and test his power out.”

“Very well.” Emperor Blackrot narrowed his eyes as they gleamed with cold light.

“Brother Bloodcloud.” Archon Silksnow sent another mental message to the black-robed elder who stood virtually side-by-side with him. “Daolord Darknorth is probably just a bit weaker than me, but my true body is still on the way back from the outside world. My avatar doesn’t have any good weapons on it; it’s probably not a match for Darknorth. Of all the Emperors present, you are the only one capable of defeating him in a head-on fight. You shall be the one to decide how we are to deal with Darknorth.”

Emperor Bloodcloud was one of the old freaks who supported Archon Silksnow from the shadows. He was Silksnow’s equal in power.

“He doesn’t have an invulnerable form, does he?” Emperor Bloodcloud

asked.

“He does not,” Archon Silksnow responded with certainty. He had used a treasure to kill Ning, and back then Ning hadn’t revealed an invulnerable form. Archon Silksnow felt certain that Ning didn’t have an invulnerable form! In addition, he had never heard of anyone developing an invulnerable form based on the Dao of the Sword. Alas, he had no idea that while it was indeed extremely difficult for the Dao of the Sword to produce an invulnerable form... there was always an exception. After Ning’s Omega Sword Dao had reached the fourth stage, he had finally gained an invulnerable form for himself... the Shadowless form.

“If he doesn’t have an invulnerable form, I’m confident in being able to kill him.” Emperor Bloodcloud nodded.

“I’m sending Emperor Blackrot to go first and test him out. Watch carefully,” Archon Silksnow said.

“Very well.” Emperor Bloodcloud nodded.

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Just by standing there, the group of Emperors inspired terror in the countless cultivators who were watching... but Ning was completely unphased.

“Daolord Darknorth, was it you who killed brother Nightwell?” A cold voice rang out, followed by an ugly, black-winged alien Emperor flying out of the group, filled with murderous malice.

“It was.” Ning’s voice filled the entire region covered within his heartworld projection. “And you are Emperor Blackrot. Have you decided to throw your life away, just as Emperor Nightwell did before you?”

To use the terminology of the Three Realms, Emperor Blackrot belonged to the ‘Diremonster’ category. He had been born as a winged monster who was born with a fondness for eating rotten meat. He had an extremely strange and evil disposition, and his favorite hobby was massacring people, waiting for their bodies to rot, and then eat their rotting corpses. That was it – he murdered people to eat them. This fiend had long ago

offended many other cultivators who wished to kill him, and so he joined the auspices of Silksnow Fiend Palace.

“Throw my life away? To you?” Emperor Blackrot was enraged. “Prepare to die.”

“Hmph.” Ning’s body flickered slightly as he manifested three heads and six arms, then brought his six Northbow swords to the ready.

Emperor Blackrot transformed into an enormous tornado of black mist which swept straight towards Ning. This wasn’t a simple invulnerable form; in truth, this was the attack which Emperor Blackform was most skilled in using. Anything touched by this black mist would immediately rot away until nothing was left. Even supreme Daolords would be unable to withstand this attack.

In addition, a terrifying illusion was hidden within the black mist. Anyone trapped within it would smile and seek out death without even trying to fight back.

“Daolord Darknorth has started to fight against Emperor Blackrot.”

“Emperor Blackrot is an extremely terrifying Eternal Emperor. Not even supreme Daolords dare to offend him.” The countless cultivators within the Sacred City all watched.

“Suppress!” Ning let out a cold shout. The formerly-restrained energy of the heartworld projection instantly flared in the area where the black mist was located! The terrifying heartworld projection was like a cage that completely trapped the black mist, causing its flying speed to lessen dramatically.

“You can die now.” The six swords struck out like tidal waves, carrying an aura of utterly destructive power with them. Countless tsunami-swords swept through the black mist which so many Daolords were terrified of. Although it contained extremely strong corrosive and poisonous properties and was filled with terrifying illusions, it wasn’t actually less effective than Emperor Nightwell’s invulnerable form in terms of ablating the power of enemy attacks.

“NO!!!” Emperor Blackrot instantly felt despair, and he let out a horrified scream. The last thing he felt before perishing was regret... and venomous hatred towards Archon Silksnow. It was Archon Silksnow who had warned him that Darknorth’s illusions were very powerful, but that Darknorth was slightly weaker than the Archon himself.

Blackrot had felt certain that even if he had to fight Archon Silksnow, he would still be able to block a few dozen attacks. Daolord Darknorth, however, had just annihilated him with just a single attack. Weaker than Archon Silksnow? He was clearly much, much more powerful!

Whooooosh. His black mist form was completely extinguished by Ning’s sword-shadows... and Emperor Blackrot became the second Emperor to perish under Ning’s sword since Ning’s decision to reveal his brilliance.

The world returned to its normal calm. Ning called his swords back and sent them back into their sheaths. He stood tall and simply stared at the twenty-five completely awestruck Emperors. Archon Silksnow in particular had a look of utter disbelief on his face. He truly couldn’t believe what had just happened. Just a ‘short’ while ago, he had completely dominated Daolord Darknorth... how had the man become this powerful? This was completely impossible!

“No. No. This makes no sense whatsoever.” Archon Silksnow couldn’t understand it. How could a Daolord be THIS powerful?

# Chapter 12: All Together!

Archon Silksnow and all of his Eternal Emperors were dazed and in a state of disbelief. They had been accustomed to being exalted figures for countless years, and they were used to holding Daolords in disdain! There was a qualitative difference between Emperors and Daolords, and the chasm between the two was as great as the gap between Heaven and Earth. Ever since the most ancient of times, there had never been a Daolord who could stand at the very apex of power in the Endless Territories.

What did the apex of power mean? It didn't mean you were necessarily the strongest... but it meant that you did not need to fear anyone.

The Archons of the Sacred Cities were capable of making this claim. They might not be able to defeat the three Hegemons, but at least they were confident in staying alive in the face of a Hegemonic attack! Unless, of course, the three Hegemons were willing to pay the enormous price needed to kill an Archon. Otherwise, killing them would be extremely hard.

These people made up the very apex of power in the Flamedragon Realmverse... and Daolords had never, ever joined their ranks.

"H-he's a Daolord... how can he be this powerful? He slew Emperor Blackrot in just one strike?"

"He's so strong! He should be even stronger than Archon Silksnow."

"None of the eight Archons are necessarily a match for him."

"Can Daolords really become as powerful as this?"

"Can he have succeeded in his Daomerge and become an Emperor? Given how powerful he previously was... if he really did succeed in his Daomerge, he'd definitely become a Hegemon. He's extremely powerful, but he doesn't give me that sense of Hegemonic pressure... he probably isn't a Hegemon yet. He's still a Daolord. But how can a Daolord be this powerful?"

These Emperors were filled with many different things. This had completely overturned their worldview, overturned common sense itself. When Ning revealed his fierceness, he had completely overthrown the notion that Daolords weren't worthy of any consideration!

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"Eh?" Far away within the void outside Silksnow City was Hegemon Brightshore. He had secretly hurried here and was watching from afar.

"Darknorth is actually this powerful?" Hegemon Brightshore was surprised, delighted, but also puzzled. He was surprised at delighted by the fact that the Brightshore Kingdom had finally gained a new major power (aside from himself) that was capable of overawing the various organizations within the Endless Territories. His confusion, however, stemmed from the fact that not even he understood how Ning had reached such a level of power.

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Ning faced Archon Silksnow and his Emperors, not even bothering to disguise the murderous look in his eyes at all. His gaze focused on Archon Silksnow, and he growled: "What... Archon Silksnow, are you afraid now? Too afraid to fight me? Do you want to send all of your Emperors out to surround and attack me?"

Archon Silksnow had an ugly look on his face. His white brows fluttered, and his oily green eyes were filled with cold light.

"Why are you hesitating? What are you afraid of?" Ning stared at him. "Haven't you been doing your best to track me down? I've come right to you, and we're in front of your base... and NOW you are afraid?"

They were indeed afraid. Of the twenty-five Emperors, only Archon Silksnow and Emperor Bloodcloud were able to remain fairly calm. The others felt a sense of intense fear when they stared at the distant white-robed youth with a black sheath on his back. They did indeed fear him, because they understood that he could probably kill them with just one blow! He was even considerably more powerful than Archon Silksnow himself. How could they not be afraid of him?

“What should we do, Silksnow?” Emperor Bloodcloud sent frantically, “This Daolord Darknorth is much more powerful than you claimed. He’s stronger than both of us! You want ME to deal with HIM? How?!”

“Don’t panic. Don’t panic!” Archon Silksnow hurriedly sent a mental message to calm his old friend: “I didn’t expect him to be this strong either. Back when we fought, he really was weaker than me. In fact, he died once by my hands! I have no idea how he suddenly became as strong as this! But don’t worry, my true body is already returning at maximum speed and will soon arrive. We’ll work together to command the other Emperors to set up a formation together to deal with him.”

“Set up a formation to deal with him?” Emperor Bloodcloud hesitated. “Using that against a Daolord... we’re going to lose a lot of face once people hear about it.”

“Face doesn’t matter at a time like this! Daolord Darknorth is indeed powerful, and he’s qualified to force us to do this.” Archon Silksnow’s eyes glimmered with cold malice as he sent mentally, “Since he’s attacked our home and headquarters, the Silksnow Fiend Palace, then we should give him what he asks for. All of us shall join together into a formation to kill him. He walks the path of the Dao of the Sword; he shouldn’t have an invulnerable form! That means we have a chance to kill him.”

“He’s very powerful. Even if we do set up a formation, we won’t necessarily succeed.” Emperor Bloodcloud still wasn’t convinced by this plan.

“Let’s give it a shot. We still have a chance,” Emperor Silksnow sent. “All Daolords are madmen when they fail their Daomerge. If Daolord Darknorth fails his in the future, he’ll act even more berserk than he is today. If he doesn’t die? We’ll probably have to hide for the rest of our lives and avoid him. Are you willing to live a life like that?”

“Fine, we’ll give it a try.” Emperor Bloodcloud agreed.

“My true body has just arrived.” Archon Silksnow revealed a delighted look. His avatar was still significantly weaker than his true body, especially since it didn’t have any formidable lifeblood weapons on it.

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Although this all took time to describe, only a few seconds had passed since Ning had slain Emperor Blackrot and said a few words. Right at this moment, a dimensional ripple appeared off in the distance. Ning couldn't help but turn his head, only to see a skinny, white-robed man fly towards the city at high speed, his white brows fluttering. It was Archon Silksnow.

"You came quite fast." Ning chuckled softly. "Killing your avatar is meaningless. I've been waiting for your true body to come."

"Quite audacious." Archon Silksnow immediately flew forwards, joining together with Emperor Bloodcloud and the others as he roared angrily, "Fellow Emperors, Daolord Darknorth has actually dared to assault us, the Silksnow Fiend Palace. Let us send him to his death. Everyone, attack!"

"Attack!"

"Attack!" Archon Silksnow and Emperor Bloodcloud were both filled with the desire to do murder. As they were the leaders of the group, the other Emperors all joined together, following their lead to attack. Although some were here in person, most were mere avatars. However, Emperor-class avatars had incredibly strong Immortal energy, and when used to set up a formation they weren't much weaker than their true bodies. All of a sudden, an enormous blood-colored wheel appeared and began to slowly turn as it surged towards Ning.

This killing formation was incredibly famous in the Endless Territories. It was known as the 'Seven Killers of the Blood Disk' formation. It had been created by a reclusive and ancient Emperor of the Dao Alliance, and the Silksnow Fiend Palace used it to guard themselves and fight against their opponents.

"What a terrifying killer formation." The countless cultivators in the Sacred City all held their breaths. They could sense that this time, Daolord Darknorth was in real danger. Who could possibly resist such a grand formation when set up by Archon Silksnow and so many other Emperors?

Ning laughed. "A formation? Is that all you got?" An invisible surge of power swept out from Ning. [Heartforce Eradicator]!

Ning's Omega Sword Dao had already reached the fourth stage, making his heartforce eradication art even more profound than before. Ning's [Heartforce Eradicator] had always been based off the secrets of his Omega Sword Dao. Now, a terrifying will of annihilation swept out and struck against the souls and truesouls of all of the twenty-plus Emperors. Although the formation was formidable, it didn't hinder Ning's heartforce in the slightest.

Eradication!!!

The twenty-five Emperors all felt their souls and truesouls suffer a powerful strike, and they hurriedly relied on their Dao-hearts to resist the strike.

"Ahhhh!" A series of screams rang out. Of the twenty-plus Emperors, five of them perished on the spot, their souls exterminated.

Ning was rather surprised. His [Heartforce Eradicator] was now far more powerful than it had been in the past, giving him a chance to slay even supreme Daolords. However, he knew that these Eternal Emperors had all been alive for extremely long periods of time, and their Dao-hearts had been tempered to be incredibly strong. To use the [Heartforce Eradicator] to slay them should've been quite difficult. How did he just kill five at one blow?

"It makes sense. The ones which died were all avatars; avatars only have part of the true body's godsense within it, after all." Ning suddenly understood.

Avatars contained part of their owner's godsense within them. Their souls were much weaker than the souls within true bodies, and so they were much weaker when resisting heartforce attacks. Thus, five of them instantly perished to Ning's [Heartforce Eradicator].

"Not good."

"Our formation's been broken!"

"Quick, assemble into a different formation." Archon Silksnow and Emperor Bloodcloud immediately realized that they were in trouble. Now

that five Emperors' avatars had been exterminated, their formation had been blown apart. They immediately changed into a different variation of the formation to make up for their losses. The 'Seven Killers of the Blood Disk' formation had to have at least seven people within it in order to set up the formation, but it could scale up indefinitely. All they had to do was to change the formation slightly, and they'd be able to make up for the breaches. However... things wouldn't develop as smoothly as they had hoped.

"Dreamstar art." After unleashing the [Heartforce Eradicator], Ning immediately executed his [Dreamstar] illusions."

The [Dreamstar] art was even more insidious than the [Heartforce Eradicator]. It was harder to defend against and completely undetectable, capable of causing Emperors to be drawn into illusions before they even knew what was happening. It must be remembered that Emperor Nightwell had an extremely strong Dao-heart, but he was still caught by the illusions. One could imagine how powerful Ning's [Dreamstar] art had become! The Archons who were at the same level as him might be able to resist it, but those who were a level lower than him would find it quite hard to defend against.

Of the surviving Emperors, a total of sixteen were instantly trapped within the Dreamstar illusions. Five had died, while sixteen had been trapped within the illusions. The entire 'Seven Killers of the Blood Disk' formation crumbled apart before a single blow was struck.

# Chapter 13: Absolute Massacre

“Our formation! Our formation!” Archon Silksnow and Emperor Bloodcloud were both flabbergasted. Right now, only five Emperors were still able to maintain their clarity of mind, the two of them included. There was no way they could continue to form the ‘Seven Killers of the Blood Disk’ formation.

“Attack!” After executing the [Heartforce Eradicator] and the [Dreamdust] illusions in succession, Ji Ning made his move.

Rumble... countless arcs of light appeared in the area around Ning. At the same time, a dazzlingly beautiful pair of golden wings appeared above Ning as well. Under the direction of the golden wings, the countless arcs of sword-light began to form into a chaosworld generated by the Dao of the Sword. The golden wings then howled through the air, instantly flying over towards the Emperors.

The golden wings simply flew far, far too fast. They had to be at least ten times faster than Ning’s flying speed!

Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom!

Omega Sword Dao – Yin-Yang! This domain had been created via a pair of partially-mastered Hegemonic secret arts, and its power was so great as to be inconceivable.

The golden wings howled through the air as they sliced at the divine bodies of the Emperors who were present in person. The avatars all had bodies comparable to peak Eternal treasures, making them impossible to kill... but the ‘real’ Emperors had fairly frail bodies in comparison. Even though Ning had a precious Hegemonic legacy, he had to use up an absolutely enormous amount of treasures in order to train his body to the high-grade Eternal treasure level.

Most of these Emperors had bodies comparable to low-grade Eternal treasures. A few had reached the middle-grade Eternal treasure level, and extremely few had reached the high-grade Eternal treasure level. If they were able to focus their efforts on defending, they would be able to do so...

but they were trapped in illusions and completely incapable of fighting back. Ning was able to attack them with impunity; how could they possibly endure in a situation like this?

It was much like what had happened when Ning was still very weak and paid a visit to the Azureflower Estate. Although his body had been comparable to a low-grade Eternal treasure at the time, he had nearly been beaten to death by one of the two overseers. Thankfully, he had a suit of Hegemon armor on him! These Emperors, however, certainly didn't have Hegemonic armor on them.

Slash! Slash! Slash! In the blink of an eye, the sharp feathers of the golden wings sliced through six of the Eternal Emperors. They were chopped apart, then ground into dust by the countless arcs of light. They died on the spot. Two Eternal Emperors, had sufficiently strong protective divine abilities that they managed to survive.

"Six more down." Ning showed no mercy at all; he felt nothing save the desire to kill the Emperors under the banner of Silksnow Fiend Palace. All of them had gone beyond the bounds of mere dispassionate selfishness and into the level of being true 'demons'. That was why so many Emperors hated them and wished to kill them. However, these demons had joined forces to form a powerful organization, making it so that the other Emperors didn't dare to offend them.

Clang! Clang! Clang! Sword-light continuously clashed against the avatars, creating clanking sounds. The avatars, however, managed to endure the strikes.

As for the three Emperors who were able to maintain their mental clarity, they were completely stunned by this. Six of them had died almost instantly? Only now did they understand that Daolord Darknorth had the power to kill them with ease.

"Archon, we can't fight him head-on."

"Archon, we're going to leave now."

"Ah?!" "B-b-but..." The two who had been trapped by the illusions but who had sufficiently strong protective divine abilities and thus survived

Ning's attacks now finally came back to their senses. They were terrified by what they saw, and they immediately began to flee. There was no time for them to show sympathy to others; they immediately used their best escape-type treasures to flee. The twin suppressive effects of the Sword Dao chaosworld and the heartworld projection caused their flying speed to be dramatically lowered, and they didn't want to spend a minute longer than was necessary.

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Just a few moments ago, Archon Silksnow and Emperor Bloodcloud had been leading the Emperors in surrounding and attacking Ning... but in the blink of an eye, six of the Emperors had perished, five of the avatars had been destroyed, and the remaining avatars had all been trapped by illusions.

The surviving Emperors all began to flee. Only Archon Silksnow and Emperor Bloodcloud remained safe and sound... for now.

"This secret art...?" Emperor Bloodcloud had an ugly look on his face as he stared at the countless arcs of sword-light and the golden pair of wings. "Silksnow, you actually tried to tell me that he's slightly weaker than you? These secret arts alone are already vastly beyond our level of power."

"How the hell could I have known that he's this powerful?!" Archon Silksnow was feeling frustrated and frantic as well. "Eh?" Archon Silksnow's face tightened. "Where's Darknorth? He suddenly vanished."

"An assassination art. I've heard of his assassination arts." Emperor Bloodcloud's face tightened as well. He also realized that Ning had vanished, and this was something which shocked both of them.

"Let an endless sea of blood come forth," Emperor Bloodcloud growled, immediately unleashing his invulnerable form and transforming into a vast sea of blood that filled the surrounding area and protected Archon Silksnow.

Slash! A streak of sword-light tore through the bloody waves. "It's Darknorth!" Emperor Bloodcloud and Archon Silksnow both turned pale as the three-headed, six-armed, white-robed Ning suddenly appeared.

Ning used his six Northbow swords to tear through the waves of blood as he shot straight towards Archon Silksnow. He snapped coldly, "Silksnow, prepare to die."

Ning's Godwings were truly ridiculously fast. Ning himself was a bit slower, but he was still faster than Archon Silksnow, especially now that the Archon was being suppressed by the heartworld projection. However, Archon Silksnow refused to admit defeat. He also manifested six arms, holding a warblade in each as he charged towards Ning.

Whoosh. Ning's swords flowed like water, bringing a tsunami of sword-light with them. They possessed the explosive power of tidal waves but were also incredibly gentle, almost like the caress of a lover.

"Eh?" Archon Silksnow's face changed. He strove to use his six warblades to block the soft and nearly invisible sword-arts Ning was using, but Ning's upgraded [Heartsword] made his sword-arts even more ghostly than before. His attacks were also noticeably faster, giving Archon Silksnow no chance to block them at all.

Two of the streaks of sword-light coiled around his body like fingers, beginning to tie him up in knots. Whoosh! Archon Silksnow immediately transformed into countless snowflakes that fled and then reformed off in the distance.

"Running?" Ning felt a bit unsettled as well. He wasn't sure if he would be able to kill Archon Silksnow, as his opponent had an invulnerable form. Good invulnerable forms were just too hard to deal with.

"How can he be this strong? His sword-arts are simply too fast. He beat me in just one exchange!" Archon Silksnow was running around while panicking. It must be remembered that he previously had been able to dominate Ning with ease; if it hadn't been for the Hegemon armor, he probably would've killed Ning already. Now, however, the difference in power between him and the current Ning was just as great as the difference between him and the past Ning... except reversed.

In fact... Ning's advantage was actually a bit greater.

"Be destroyed!!!" Ning put away five of his Northbow swords, then

gripped the sixth with all six of his hands. He unleashed his most powerful attack with all the power he had available to him... the Omega Sword Dao – Heavenbreaker.

BOOM!! The entire region of empty space above the Sacred City seemed to have completely shattered apart. A savage tidal wave seemed to have appeared in the pitch-black space, a tidal wave which had the power to destroy all in its path. This was a tsunami of sword-light, and it caused those who viewed it to feel a sense of powerlessness. Even Hegemon Brightshore, who was watching from afar, was stunned: “What powerful sword-arts.”

In this instant, even karma was suppress. Spacetime froze, with all dimensional and temporal bubbles freezing in place. Even Emperor Bloodcloud, still in the form of a sea of blood, felt a sense of terror. This was absolute power, and it inspired more terror than anything else.

“Impossible.” Archon Silksnow could hardly believe it. He strove to use his six warblades to defend.

BOOM! He was like a praying mantis trying to use its arms to block a chariot. Archon Silksnow was instantly dominated and crushed by the terrifying tidal wave of sword-light, and his divine power was instantly crushed apart into countless snowflakes. The snow fluttered away, reforming far away into an ashen-faced Archon Silksnow. He wasn’t injured, but the psychological blow he had just suffered had an enormous impact on him.

“Silksnow, Darknorth is far too powerful. There’s no way for us to fight him. Let’s leave!” Emperor Bloodcloud began to move to flee.

“Leave? And go where? His strike just now was so powerful that it compressed even spacetime. There’s no way for us to even tear through spacetime to flee.” Archon Silksnow seemed to have gone mad. He roared mentally, “We have to use our most important treasures if we want to escape. Since we are already going to use at least one of them... let’s use them up and try to kill him! Each of us will use one of them. We might be able to kill him.”

Emperor Bloodcloud was stunned.

“If we can’t kill him, we’ll have to hide for as long as he is alive,” Archon Silksnow said. “Let’s give it a shot! He doesn’t have an invulnerable form; we might be able to kill him.”

“Fine.” Emperor Bloodcloud also felt that this type of life would be far too craven. If the two were so frightened as to immediately flee... then so long as Ning was alive, they would have to remain hidden.

Better to go all-out and give it a shot. Perhaps they’d actually succeed in killing this terrifying Daolord.

“Go.” Archon Silksnow produced a broken gray longspear, sending it flying through the air. It looked quite ordinary and didn’t have any special aura to it, but the countless cultivators within the Sacred City who saw it felt a sense of absolute horror when they saw it. They all knew that just the tiniest portion of the power hidden within the spear would probably be enough to kill them all.

“Kill!” Emperor Bloodcloud produced a curved, glowing object. It was hard to see the object’s true appearance. Emperor Bloodcloud gritted his teeth, then sent it flying outwards.

Whoosh! A dazzling crescent moon immediately appeared in the skies, its light blurry and gentle. This absolutely beautiful crescent moon flew towards Ning in a seemingly slow manner, but it actually moved a bit faster than even the gray longspear.

“He has to die.” Archon Silksnow and Emperor Bloodcloud both watched eagerly. This was their last hope.

# Chapter 14: Spread Far and Wide

The light of the crescent moon seemed very slow, but it was actually ridiculous fast. In addition, the light it released completely covered Ji Ning, making it so that he couldn't even evade it via his 'Shadowless' evasion art.

"So this is a Hegemon's power? Perfect for me to test myself out." Ning was brimming with the desire to do battle, and his three-headed, six-armed form wielded all six Northbow swords with defensive sword-arts.

Whoosh. The crescent moon instantly slashed towards Ning, an object of supreme beauty that was filled with terrifying danger.

Ning's sword-light flared up as well, transforming into gentle tsunami that swirled around him, forming a whirlpool that then transformed into a black hole. However, at the borders of the black hole a few ripples of tsunami sword-light could be seen.

Slash! The crescent moon 'gently' flew into the black hole. BOOM!!!! The skies above the Sacred City suddenly exploded as spacetime itself split apart, generating multiple layers of cracked and distorted dimensional continuums. Even Ning was knocked backwards uncontrollably by the force of the shockwave.

Ning could sense how the attack burned through his layers of defenses, then slammed against him. Ning revealed a smile. His entire body was feeling a bit numb, but it actually felt nice. All the training he had undergone and all of the many legacies he had acquired had finally let him reach a level where he could easily block a Hegemonic strike. Although the attack still dominated him, his body was quite stable. He hadn't even spat out any blood! This meant that the difference in power wasn't all that great.

"Now, I stand at the very apex of power amongst the Archons. I'm very close to the Hegemons, while my sword-arts are highly defensive... the treasures which Archon Silksnow and Emperor Bloodcloud are launching at me aren't of much threat to me any longer." Ning smiled.

Whoosh. Right at this moment, that plain-looking gray longspear flew towards him. The longspear's tip was filled with an extremely terrifying destructive force.

"Judging from how it looks... it should've been a relic left behind by the Sithe." Ning watched as the spear flew towards him, feeling quite relaxed as he evaluated its power. "I wonder what technique the Sithe used to infuse a spear-tip with such terrifying power." The sword-tsunami once more appeared around him, then transformed into a black hole that began to defend against the attacking gray spear.

Crack! Spacetime began to shatter around him, revealing a jagged wound in the fabric of reality as a surge of gray power tore straight through it. Ning was once more knocked flying backwards by the strike.

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Although this took time to describe, the consecutive attacks by the crescent moon and the plain longspear were actually nearly instantaneous. Ning was knocked flying backwards and clearly at a disadvantage, but he didn't even vomit any blood, much less suffer serious injuries!

"What? B-but... how is this possible?!" Archon Silksnow and Emperor Bloodcloud were now completely stunned.

"He was actually able to face a Hegemonic strike head-on! And he wasn't even injured?!" Archon Silksnow felt a sense of a rage and disbelief... but he also understood that the difference in power between himself and Daolord Darknorth was now simply enormous. Not only did Daolord Darknorth have formidable attacks, he had even more terrifying defenses. He had defended against a Hegemonic strike, just like that!

"Silksnow, we've lost. We were defeated. We can't beat him! We have no chance at all!" Emperor Bloodcloud was filled with pain, but he tore open a spacetime tunnel and fled into it like a giant wave of blood.

Right now, Archon Silksnow's mind was filled with many thoughts. Just a short while ago, he was one of the most elite figures of the Flamedragon Realmverse, one of the eight Archons of the Sacred Cities. Today... a mere

Daolord had beaten him into a sorry state where he was forced to retreat. Archon Silksnow understood that his power was not even close to being enough to battle Ning.

“I lost. I lost. However... this doesn’t end here. I’m definitely not going to just give up.” Archon Silksnow cast Ning a deep look. The Daolord he had once held in contempt had now become the most terrifying foe he had ever made. Archon Silksnow then cast all other thoughts aside, tearing open a spacetime tear and fleeing into it. Ning had been blasted back by the Hegemonic strikes, resulting in his Omega Sword Dao – Heavenbreaker losing its suppressive effect upon local spacetime. This was why Archon Silksnow and Emperor Bloodcloud were able to easily tear through spacetime and flee.

Archon Silksnow and Emperor Bloodcloud both understood the difference in power between them and their foe. They wisely chose to retreat.

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Ji Ning once more stood up within the empty void of space. There were no longer any cultivators around him; Silksnow and Bloodcloud had already torn through spacetime to flee, while the surviving avatars of the Emperors had taken advantage of the moment when Ning was being assaulted by the crescent moon and the plain longspear to flee in every direction. Creating a powerful avatar wasn’t easy or cheap, after all; they weren’t willing to give themselves up.

And so... the only person in the air above the Sacred City was the white-robed youth.

The countless cultivators within the Sacred City, including tens of thousands of Daolords, all stared at Ning. They were completely stunned. None of them had imagined that this would be the final result.

“Archon Silksnow fled. The other Emperors either died or fled as well.”

“Death or flight... the only one left is now Daolord Darknorth.”

“He’s too powerful.”

“Daolord Darknorth... he beat over twenty Emperors into utter submission.”

“Not even the eight Archons are a match for Daolord Darknorth.”

The countless cultivators were so excited, they were about to go crazy. They all hurried to send word of this result to their friends. This sort of unprecedented, unheard of result spread throughout the Endless Territories like mad. Every single Daolord who received word was completely stunned, as were the reclusive Emperors.

What? A Daolord had actually defeated Silksnow Fiend Palace, the rulers of one of the eight Sacred Cities?

“What? H-he’s actually this strong?” Emperor Islehide and Emperor Anchen’s avatars were still in the process of hurrying over from the Aeonian stronghold, but they were completely stunned by what they heard.

“Let’s move there immediately.”

“Quickly!” Both moved at their maximum speed.

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“A Daolord actually beat Silksnow and Bloodcloud into flight? He actually blocked Hegemonic attack-treasures head-on?” A white-haired, black-winged elder walked out of the highest tower within a palace that was located inside a beautiful world of boundless light. A stunned look was on his face. “I’ve been in seclusion, hoping to train to the Hegemon level... I never would’ve imagined that the Flamedragon Realmverse would give birth to such a powerful Daolord. How could a Daolord become this powerful? Perhaps I’ll learn something from him that can give me a better chance at reaching Hegemony.”

The black-winged, white-haired elder took a single step forwards, transforming into a streak of light that shot through spacetime and disappeared without a trace.

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“Impossible. Did you perhaps mishear things? How could a Daolord be that powerful? But... even the Emperors of the Dao Alliance are telling me the same thing. How can a Daolord be this powerful!?” A wrinkly-faced old granny walked out of a wooden house. A number of ordinary mortals were living in the area as well. The old granny’s appearance quickly changed to become noble and regal, while her robes became beautiful to behold.

The graceful old lady waved her hand, tearing a hole in spacetime and then stepping into that hole.

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Many ancient Emperors who had been in seclusion for many years and who were thought to be dead were coming out of hiding. They normally preferred not to get involved with the outside world and at most kept in touch with some of their oldest friends... but once they heard the news from those friends and they learned of what had happened in Silksnow City, they began to grow restless.

The reason why they had gone into seclusion was because they didn’t want to be bothered by mundane affairs. They wanted to quietly train in peace and live the type of life they wanted. They all sought to one day reach Hegemony. There had been some Emperors, after all, who had slowly trained until they had one day reached the Hegemon level!

Now that they heard how powerful a Daolord had become, they naturally all grew quite curious.

Hegemon Brightshore had been the first to arrive, and he had watched everything personally from hiding. Although surprised, he was still fairly calm at first... but when he saw how Ning managed to defend against the crescent moon and the plain longsword in a head-long clash, Hegemon Brightshore was truly stunned.

“Those were treasures left behind by the Sithe which were comparable in might to a Hegemon’s full-power strike.” Hegemon Brightshore was rather shocked. “Although they were a bit weaker than a full-power hit from me, it had reached Windrain and Netherlily’s levels. Darknorth

actually managed to rely on mere sword-arts to block two consecutive attacks from incredible Sithe treasures.”

“He was overpowered, true... but he still managed to endure the strike head-on. He is now at a level of power where he is on par with the most supreme of Archons. Most likely, he’s on par with the two leaders of the Dao Alliance.” Hegemon Brightshore was stunned. “Unbelievable, simply unbelievable. His only flaw is that he probably doesn’t have an invulnerable form. Those who train in the Dao of the Sword generally do not have invulnerable forms... and without one, his life-preserving abilities will be slightly lacking.”

What he didn’t know, obviously, was that Ning DID have an invulnerable form... the Shadowless form. However, a ‘mere’ Hegemonic strike wasn’t enough to force him to use it.

# Chapter 15: The Most Powerful Daolord

“His defensive sword-arts are far too powerful. He can probably rely on his sword-arts to defend against attacks from Netherlily and Windrain. As for me? He’s a member of the Brightshore Kingdom; there’s no way I’d act against him.” Hegemon Brightshore suddenly laughed. “I really never would’ve imagined that this kid Darknorth would reach a level where he needs fear no one at all within the Flamedragon Realmverse.”

“He’s a Daolord. How did he reach this level of power? I have never, ever heard of a Daolord as powerful as him, not even in the legends. He must have some secret about him.” Hegemon Brightshore looked at Ji Ning, an inquisitive look in his eyes. Even he was deeply intrigued and wanted to learn Ning’s secrets, as they might be of use to him in growing stronger as well.

Hegemon Brightshore was the number one Hegemon of the Flamedragon Realmverse, yes, but there were other realmverses and otherverses to worry about. There were still many who were stronger than him.

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The white-robed Ji Ning was the only person left within the skies above the Sacred City. Ning swept the area with his gaze, then glanced in a certain direction. He could vaguely sense that it was most likely Hegemon Brightshore who was hiding over there, and that there were a number of other major powers watching from the shadows.

“Silksnow Fiend Palace.” Ning’s gaze finally turned to the towering palace which was the seat of Silksnow Fiend Palace.

Boom! Ning suddenly transformed to become a three million meter titan. He reached out with his two hands to claw at Silksnow Fiend Palace, trying to tear it upwards. This instantly caused many runes to light up as the barriers around the palace sought to protect it. When the runes lit up, Ning began to analyze them carefully. The reason why he was using brute force at first was so that he would have a chance to better analyze all of

the mysteries contained within the barriers. That would make it easier for him to defeat the barriers and then annihilate the entire Silksnow Fiend Palace.

“Wow.”

“Daolord Darknorth is trying to uproot Silksnow Fiend Palace.”

“Is he really going to tear out the entire palace?” The countless cultivators of the Sacred City only grew even more excited. Low-level cultivators like them naturally delighted in chaos; to them, the more Emperors died, the more interesting topics of conversation they would have.

Rumble... as Ning tugged at Silksnow Fiend Palace, he manifested three heads and six arms. Four of those arms wielded Northbow swords as he prepared to breach the barriers through raw power.

“Daolord Darknorth.” A voice rang out. The titanic three-headed, six-armed Ning raised his three heads to stare into the skies. A furry gold alien had appeared in the skies. The alien’s entire body was covered with glowing golden fur, and his aura was so mighty as to be on par with Ning’s.

“Emperor Goldisle,” Ning said.

“Daolord Darknorth, you killed many Emperors and sent Silksnow and Bloodcloud fleeing... that’s enough,” Emperor Goldisle said. “There’s no need for you to annihilate Silksnow Fiend Palace. It is, after all, one of the eight organizations which rule over the eight Sacred Cities in accordance with the pact they made with the Dao Alliance. Even though you have defeated them, if you fail your Daomerge then 108,000 chaos cycles from now they will once again rise to power.

Ning frowned. He wasn’t certain of his Daomerge chances. If he failed his Daomerge, he would eventually die... and indeed, Archon Silksnow and the others would once more reappear.

“Whether Silksnow Fiend Palace rises or falls 108,00 chaos cycles from now... is something for them to worry about 108,000 chaos cycles in the

future.” Ning’s voice was sonorous, shaking both Heaven and Earth: “So long as I, Darknorth, am alive I shall be working to destroy Silksnow Fiend Palace! If I hear word that anyone dares to proclaim himself as a disciple of Silksnow Fiend Palace, I’ll definitely kill him and show no mercy.”

“So long as I, Darknorth, am alive I shall be working to destroy Silksnow Fiend Palace!” These words echoed throughout the world around them. Ning was openly proclaiming the decision he had just made. He was now someone who stood at the very apex of power in the Flamedragon Realmverse. Not even Hegemons would be able to do anything to him! Few would be willing to challenge his decisions, and that only after careful consideration.

“Alas.” The midair Emperor Goldisle shook his head slowly upon seeing this. “If you’ve already made up your mind, then I won’t try to dissuade you. Let me remind you, however, that Silksnow Fiend Palace still has a large number of Eternal Emperors within its ranks. You might be able to kill a few, but many are scattered throughout the territories. They can avoid you while you are in your prime, but once you die your children will probably be in danger...”

A cold light flashed through Ning’s eyes. Archon Silksnow and his Emperors were all devils! If Ning was to die, they would come for revenge... and they would most likely take their vengeance upon the Three Realms and Vastheaven Palace.

Still, the reason why Ning dared to do this was because he didn’t fear these devils. First of all, the Three Realms were hidden quite securely. Its location had never been made public, and no one knew that his Three Realms was his homeland.

Second, he was planning to make another visit to the Stone Hellephant Wall and take away those four Archon-class golems as well as some of the Sithe discs. He was going to place them all in the Three Realms.

No matter what... if he truly did fail in his Daomerge and perish, he would ensure that things were taken care of. As for Vastheaven Palace? There was no need for him to worry about it. Emperor Solesky’s greatest

forte was his invulnerable aquaform; not even Archons would be able to do anything to him.

“Take revenge upon me?” Ning looked at Emperor Goldisle. “If they want to take revenge... they need to stay alive until the day I die.”

Emperor Goldisle’s eyebrows raised slightly. He couldn’t help but sigh in amazement: “Daolords! Most of them really don’t care about life and death, and they are absolutely crazy. I pity Silksnow Fiend Palace for having offended Daolord Darknorth, the poor bastards.”

Ning’s eyes were filled with coldness. He had certain options available to him. He had only trained for a brief period of time and had already reached his current level of power. It wouldn’t necessarily be impossible for him to succeed in the Daomerge! Besides, his [Heartsword] art had more room for improvement, as did his heartforce secret arts. It must be remembered that his heartforce illusions were actually still weaker than the Daolord Featherdress’s; the reason his heartforce attacks had already become this powerful was purely due to how strong his heartforce was.

Once he upgraded his heartforce and secret arts further... Ning’s heartforce abilities would definitely inspire terror in countless Eternal Emperors. If they were attacked by Hegemons, they might be able to flee... but once they were trapped in Ning’s illusions, they would have no chance to escape. This was what made Eternal Emperors who were Heartforce Cultivators so terrifying.

“I’ll take things one step at a time.” Ning was quite relaxed, continuing to try and uproot Silksnow Fiend Palace with two of his arms as countless runes flickered over its surface. As for his other four arms, they wielded the Northbow swords, executing sword-arts as Ning started to break the formations and barriers apart.

By now, not a single Emperor remained within Silksnow Fiend Palace; all of them had fled. If an Emperor was left, it probably would’ve been a bit more difficult for Ning to break these barriers apart... but since no one was actively managing them, Ning was able to forcibly tear through them with his overwhelming power.

Whoosh! Boom! A large number of formations began to be torn apart by force.

Rumble... the servants and retainers throughout Silksnow Fiend Palace began to flee in terror as Ning began to rip the palace out from its foundation. After just ten or so breaths of time, Ning's Northbow swords managed to tear apart all of the formations.

Whoosh. Ning managed to uproot the entire Silksnow Fiend Palace just like a giant carrot.

The three-headed, six-armed Ning was over three million meters tall, and the sight of him uprooting Silksnow Fiend Palace caused all of the countless cultivators in the Sacred City to sigh in amazement. They would probably never be able to forget this sight... and they would forever celebrate the fact that they had witnessed this with their own eyes. This was, without question, the most freakishly powerful and talented Daolord who had ever existed in the annals of history.

"Come here." With but a thought, Ning drew Silksnow Fiend Palace into his estate-world. The Sacred City of Silksnow looked just as peaceful and calm as before... but the place where Silksnow Fiend Palace had once been was now completely empty.

"Silksnow Fiend Palace is finished."

"They're doomed."

"No one will dare to claim membership in Silksnow Fiend Palace for at least 108,000 chaos cycles." The cultivators all sighed with emotion. Most of the members of Silksnow Fiend Palace were ordinary cultivators, after all; there were only thirty or so Emperors to begin with! Eight had died today, leaving only twenty-plus Emperors. The rest were all Daolords or World-level cultivators, but there was no way they would be able to live past 108,000 chaos cycles.

Thus... for the vast majority of cultivators, the formerly awe-inspiring Silksnow Fiend Palace was truly and completely finished, its foundation destroyed. Only the Emperors were left, but all of them had gone into hiding in fear of Ning discovering them.

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The skies above the Sacred City. Ning, who had just uprooted Silksnow Fiend Palace, was standing face-to-face with Emperor Goldisle. “Daolord Darknorth, please follow me,” Emperor Goldisle said.

Ning turned to glance at him. He saw a gold-colored world rapidly expanding within the void, and within it Ning was able to vaguely make out the forms of Hegemon Brightshore, Hegemon Nightlily, Hegemon Windrain, and a number of other figures who emanated auras of incredible power.

“The three Hegemons and quite a few of the more reclusive Emperors have all shown up. They wish to meet with you, Darknorth.” Emperor Goldisle smiled. “You truly are the most powerful Daolord to ever exist since the ancient days. All of these old fellows wish to meet you.”

“I do indeed need to meet them.” Ning nodded.

“Come on over, Darknorth. There’s nothing for you to worry about,” the distant Hegemon Brightshore sent mentally from within that golden world. No matter what, Ning was a member of the Brightshore Kingdom; as the Brightshore Hegemon, he was definitely going to stand on Ning’s side.

“Coming.” Swoosh. Swoosh. Ning and Emperor Goldisle immediately flew towards the golden world. As the two flew inside, the golden world became completely sealed off. The world had been established just a few billion kilometers outside the Sacred City of Silksnow, but ordinary Eternal Emperors would never be able to discover it.

# Chapter 16: The Great Flamedragon Conference

Ji Ning swept the golden world with his gaze after entering it. In front of him were nine clouds, and each cloud had upon it a table covered with precious Immortal wine and fruit.

Seven of the clouds were occupied by seven major powers who were seated in the lotus position. They included the white-robed, white-bearded Hegemon Brightshore, the green-haired Hegemon Windrain, the dazzlingly beautiful Hegemon Netherlily, and the black-robed, black-haired Emperor Blackcloud of the Dao Alliance. As for the other three, Ning had never met them before. Their auras, however, were quite extraordinary.

“Incredible.” Ning’s heart clenched. “The reclusive old experts of the Flamedragon Realmverse have probably all come out.”

“Darknorth, sit.” Emperor Goldisle pointed at the two clouds which were still empty.

“After you, Emperor Goldisle,” Ning said modestly. Emperor Goldisle was one of the two leaders of the Dao Alliance, after all. The two flew forwards together, then parted to sit down atop each of their respective clouds. Now, all nine major powers were present.

“Haha... it’s rare to have such a lively gathering.” Emperor Goldisle swept the others with his gaze after sitting down, then let out a ringing laugh: “It has been a long time since I’ve seen my old friends here... and now, I’ve seen you all.”

“It has indeed been quite some time.” A gold-haired, gold-robed man seated off in the distance smiled. “It is all thanks to fellow Daoist Darknorth that all of us have a chance to meet today. Haha... I suppose we can consider this a new Great Flamedragon Conference.”

“Of course it is. All of the major powers who usually take part in the conference have all gathered here today.” Emperor Blackcloud nodded and

smiled. “All of you normally spend your time in seclusion; it isn’t easy to meet you! Today, however, all of you have come on your own volition.”

“Given how impressive fellow Daoist Darknorth is, how could we not come out to meet him?” The graceful, noble-looking woman smiled as she spoke.

“Of course we came for the sake of fellow Daoist Darknorth. I’ve seen your tired old faces plenty of times already,” a silver-haired, black-robed youth said.

Emperor Goldisle turned to look at Ning, then smiled. “Darknorth, let me make the introductions. I’m sure you already know the three Hegemons over here: Hegemon Brightshore, Hegemon Windrain, and Hegemon Netherlily. I don’t need to introduce Emperor Blackcloud either...”

Ning nodded, continuing to listen.

“This gentleman,” Emperor Goldisle pointed towards the gold-robed, gold-haired man, “is pretty much the longest living Emperor of the Dao Alliance. His name is Emperor Goldface, and long ago he was once an Archon of a Sacred City! However, he later gave it up and retreated into seclusion. He now rarely shows himself, and very few people even know about him.”

“Emperor Goldface!” Ning immediately said, “So you are Emperor Goldface. Although Darknorth has heard of you before, I knew very little about you. Today, I finally have the chance to meet with you.”

Emperor Goldface was definitely an awesomely famous Emperor. He was the most dazzling figure of an era, the most illustrious Emperor of his time. Later on, for some unknown reason, he had become a very low-key figure and had disappeared without a trace. He was so ancient and long-lived that he was already quite famous when the Dawn War first began.

“Not worth mentioning, not worth mentioning.” Emperor Goldface felt quite smug, but he spoke in an artificially humble manner.

“Let me make another introduction...” Emperor Goldisle pointed at the

graceful and noble-looking woman. “This is Empress Jade Phoenix. She is actually the youngest member of of our little group.”

“Greetings, Empress Jade Phoenix,” Ning said.

“No need to be courteous, fellow Daoist Darknorth.” Empress Jade Phoenix nodded and smiled at him.

Finally, Emperor Goldisle looked at the silver-haired, black-robed youth. “This is Daoist Bluestone. He is, without a question, the number one expert of our Dao Alliance.”

“You praise me too much,” the silver-haired, black-robed youth said.

Ning was briefly startled. Bluestone? He couldn’t help but think back to Spring Grass and her little brother, but in the next instant he focused on what Emperor Goldisle had just said. The number one expert of the Dao Alliance? If he was making that claim in front of all these people... it was probably true.

Ning suddenly heard the voice of Hegemon Brightshore ring out in his mind: “Darknorth, all of these ancient members of the Dao Alliance have gathered here today because of you. That’s why you need to be careful. Emperor Goldface and Empress Jade Phoenix are nothing to worry about, but you have to be wary of Daoist Bluestone. He is incredibly strong. Although he’s not a Hegemon, he’s strong enough to stand as equals to the three of us.”

Ning was rather shocked upon hearing this. “Then why have I never heard of Daoist Bluestone before?” Ning sent back.

“Because of the five Emperors of the Dao Alliance before you, Daoist Bluestone has the best temperament and is the most low-key. He doesn’t care about empty titles and reputation; his focus is purely on the Dao. Although he is the undisputed number one figure within the Dao Alliance, there are very few who even know about him. That’s why, although you need to be careful with you, you don’t need to worry too much. He’s an extremely even-tempered and amiable man,” Hegemon Brightshore sent.

“He’s not a Hegemon. Why is he able to stand alongside Hegemons in

power?” Ning sent back.

“Daoist Bluestone rose to power as a mortal cultivator, and so he has both a true body and a Primaltwin. After succeeding in his Daomerge to become an Emperor, he focused all of his efforts on secluded meditation and training, resulting in him becoming one of the most elite members of the Dao Alliance. He sent his true body roving through the outside world... and roughly three hundred thousand chaos cycles ago, he found a Sithe relic site. He allowed his Primaltwin to undergo the Ritual Sacrificium, converting it into one of the Black Emperors of the Sithe race while his true body remained ‘normal’.”

“Now, his true body continues to train in seclusion while his Black Emperor Primaltwin goes out exploring. He has more treasures than anyone else in the entire Dao Alliance. You absolutely cannot make an enemy out of him. He might be an extremely amiable person, but if you really do manage to somehow piss him off, the consequences would be absolutely unimaginable.”

Ning was speechless. Black Emperor? That referred to those onyx humanoid figures, right? Those things definitely had Hegemonic levels of power! During the Dawn War, a single one of the onyx humanoids had been enough to drag two Hegemons to their deaths. Daoist Bluestone had converted his Primaltwin into one of them? No wonder he was able to sit alongside the three mighty Hegemons as peers!

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The two communicated in secret quite quickly, and now Ning had a better understanding of those who were before him.

Emperor Goldface looked at Ning, a smile on his face: “Fellow Daoist Darknorth, you truly are impressive. You were able to defeat over twenty Emperors as a Daolord! Even when Silksnow and Bloodcloud joined forces, they still weren’t able to withstand so much as a single blow from you. I’ve never even heard of a Daolord like you. I rarely admire others, but I have to say that I truly do admire you, fellow Daoist Darknorth.”

“You praise me too much,” Ning said.

“No need to be humble, Darknorth.” Hegemon Netherlily spoke out in praise as well. “You are indeed the most powerful Daolord I have seen or even heard of. My horizons have truly been broadened. I now know that even Daolords can reach such an incredible level of power.”

“Yes, all of our horizons have been broadened,” Daoist Bluestone said with a sigh. “For a Daolord to reach this level of power... if you can succeed in your Daomerge, you’ll probably be far stronger than other Hegemons. You might even become comparable to an Otherverse Lord.”

Otherverse Lords were generally Hegemons who managed to seize control over an alternate universe and who were able to control the prime essences of that universe, borrowing from it to dramatically strengthen themselves.

“But I’m quite puzzled.” Hegemon Windrain spoke out as well. “Darknorth, my young friend... why is it that despite being a Daolord, you have reached such an incredible level of power?”

“I’m puzzled as well.” Emperor Goldface looked at Ning. “Would you be willing to relieve us of our confusion, fellow Daoist Darknorth?”

All of the Emperors, including Daoist Bluestone and the three mighty Hegemons, were all staring straight at Ning. Even though Hegemon Brightshore stood on Ning’s side, he was still curious about Ning’s Dao. Every single cultivator hoped to be able to walk as far along the path of the Dao as they could, and so they were naturally interested in Ning’s Dao.

How could a Daolord be this powerful? What was the reason behind it? If they knew the reason, perhaps they would be inspired by it. Perhaps it would be of help to them. Naturally, every single one of the major powers were extremely intrigued in it.

Ning wasn’t surprised by this. Everything was as he had expected. He himself was a cultivator; he knew just how much cultivators cared about the Dao. It was precisely because he knew that his sudden explosion in power would attract quite a bit of trouble and that many other major powers might appear to cause trouble for him. Although he wasn’t afraid of them, if he ended up fighting and offending a large group of people

then things would become troublesome for him the future.

That was why he had decided to just 'kill a chicken to scare the monkeys', stunning and warning everyone, especially the weaker ones, that he was not to be trifled with. In the end, only the most elite major powers of the entire Flamedragon Realmverse were qualified to come speak with him about it... but even then, they had to behave with courtesy and treat him as an honored guest! This was indeed the best possible outcome which Ning had hoped for.

A nice, peaceful discussion; how wonderful would that be? He would be able to resolve his potential future troubles at one go. Even if a few ended up becoming his enemies, it would be within the realm of what he could handle.

This group could indeed be described as the most powerful force within the entire Flamedragon Realmverse. The only ones here aside from the leaders of the Dao Alliance were the three Hegemons! Figures like Emperor Anchen, the supreme leader of the Aeonians, were individually comparable to the likes of Emperor Goldface... but the Aeonians as a race were far too weak. They were also mortal enemies of the Dao Alliance. As a result, they were naturally excluded from this event.

Thus... the only ones invited to take part were the five supreme Emperors of the Dao Alliance and the three Hegemons.

# Chapter 17: Omega Sword Dao

Ji Ning swept his gaze across the eight supreme experts of the Flamedragon Realmverse, then smiled: “Since you are all curious, I’ll chat a bit about it. However, this involves some of my personal secrets. I hope that you will not casually spread it to others; the fewer who know about it, the better.”

“That goes without saying,” Emperor Goldface said hurriedly. Was the kid joking? The fewer who knew a secret, the more precious the secret would be. If everyone knew it, the eight of them wouldn’t have any advantage at all.

The other major powers were all delighted as well. None of them had expected Ning to be this easy-going about it.

“The path of cultivation is a stratified one; there are greater Daos and there are lesser Daos,” Ning said. “World-level cultivators must develop their own Daos and use them to become Samsara Daolords. Some gain insight into ordinary Daos, some gain insights into formidable ones, and a few will gain insight into Supreme Daos. At the very apex are those who fuse multiple Supreme Daos together into a perfect whole.”

The three Hegemons and the five Emperors of the Dao Alliance all nodded slightly. Ning continued, “So fusing multiple Supreme Daos is the apex, the highest level of power possible, right? This is what almost all cultivators believe... but I did not believe this.”

“Are you telling me this isn’t the case?” Hegemon Windrain rumbled.

“Fusing multiple Supreme Daos has to be the apex, right?” Daoist Bluestone said, puzzled. Normally, they would state with absolute certainty that it was the apex, but facing them was Ji Ning! All of them spoke rather hesitantly; clearly, they weren’t as confident as they had been in the past.

Ning smiled. “It is not the apex!”

“What?!”

“There are even stronger Daos than that?”

“But...” The three Hegemons and the five Dao Alliance Emperors were all stunned when they heard the certainty in Ning’s response. The fact that fusing multiple Supreme Daos together was the apex of cultivation was considered common knowledge and believed unquestioningly by countless cultivators. This was the most difficult path possible... and once one succeeded in the Daomerge, one would become a Hegemon! However, Ji Ning was now telling them that there was something above that, an even more difficult and even more exalted path.

“Above fused Supreme Daos is an even superior Dao... and it is this type of Sword Dao that I used to become a Samsara Daolord,” Ning said.

“So that’s the reason.” Hegemon Netherlily nodded slowly. “As a Daolord, I did realize that my Dao was able to slowly grow and improve in strength as it drew upon the mysteries of the other Daos I trained in, allowing me to develop increasingly powerful ultimate attacks. Even back then, I was slightly puzzled by this... why was it that my fused Supreme Daos could benefit from other mysteries and continue to grow even more powerful? Was it possible that there was something above them? Now that I see Darknorth... I finally understand.”

Ning smiled. Right. Daolords who walked other paths were able to use the mysteries of other Daos to perfect their own while training, allowing them to develop stronger techniques. For example, even someone who had fused three Supreme Daos of Water would not have a Dao that fully encompassed everything pertaining to the essence of water. Naturally, he would be able to draw more from other Daos to slowly perfect his own understanding of water.

Ning, however, was different. His path was that of the Omega Sword Dao; it represented the true apex! At each individual stage, there was literally nothing further he could learn regarding the sword. This was why, once he made a breakthrough, he gained immediate access to the most perfect versions of the five stances of his Omega Sword Dao and was unable to create better techniques. He was different from other Daolords.

“I have named my Dao the Omega Sword Dao,” Ning said, then laughed. “But of course, I’m just assuming that it is the true apex. Perhaps, after countless years pass, yet another dazzling genius will appear and will tell me that there’s something that’s even superior to to my Dao. Haha...”

“If your Omega Sword Dao surpasses even fused Supreme Daos... it really should be the apex.” Hegemon Brightshore nodded slowly.

“Yes, it’d be ridiculous if there was anything more powerful,” the others agreed.

Ning smiled. When he had developed his Omega Sword Dao, a resonance had been generated with the prime essence of the Dao of the Sword. In that instant, Ning had immediately understood that he had developed the most perfect and complete Sword Dao possible. He was a true master of the Dao of the Sword.

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Above fused Supreme Daos was an even more profound type of Dao! Ning had long ago prepared to divulge this secret. If he said nothing at all, he would only attract even more suspicion from the various major powers. It was better to explain things clearly.

And... just telling them about it wouldn’t impact him personally. So what if they learned that a stronger Dao existed? It must be remembered that there were plenty of World-level geniuses who had fused multiple Supreme Daos together, and quite a few even had Hegemonic legacies. In each era, however, only a tiny number of them managed to become supreme Daolords.

Emperor Heartsword had made his [Hear sword] art available for public dissemination, and many had studied this set of sword-arts... but to this very day, the only person to truly master it remained Emperor Heartsword himself! None of those who had come later had been able to truly master it.

Ning’s ‘Omega Sword Dao’ was even tougher to master than the [Hear sword] art! It was on a much higher level than fused Supreme Daos!

Such a difficult Dao... even if Ning actually made it completely public as the [Omega Sword Dao] manual for others to study, who knew how long it would be before another peerless genius would be able to reach Ning's level in it? And of course... Ning wasn't planning to make it public!

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"The Omega Sword Dao." This name caused the major powers to all sigh in amazement. It was too late for them to learn of Omega Daos... they had all become Emperors thanks to fused Daos. Once a Dao had been chosen, there was no way to go back on it!

"Fellow Daoist Darknorth." Emperor Goldface smiled. "Now that I've heard of these incredible Omega Daos, I truly feel admiration and awe. I wonder... would you be willing to let me inspect your [Omega Sword Dao] technique and broaden my horizons? Although there's no way for me to start over on my path of cultivation, it would at least allow me to learn a few things."

Ning frowned. Let him take a look at it? Broaden his horizons? How could he casually allow others to inspect his Dao? Although there weren't many who would be able to learn the [Omega Sword Dao], Ning didn't want to just hand it out to people!

"My Omega Sword Dao shall be transmitted to my disciples in the future. I cannot casually show it to others," Ning said.

"We can share our Daos and exchange our insights," Emperor Goldface said. "I'd naturally be willing to share my Dao with you, as well as show you all of the other legacies I have accumulated in exchange, fellow Daoist Darknorth."

"Goldface, you go too far. How can you compare your Daos with fellow Daoist Darknorth's? His Dao is that of the Omega Sword Dao; it is completely unique and is superior to even fused Supreme Daos! Not even Hegemonic Daos are comparable to it." Empress Jade Phoenix frowned and said coldly, "If you want to view his [Omega Sword Dao], you should at least show a bit of sincerity."

Empress Jade Phoenix then looked at Ning. "Fellow Daoist Darknorth, to

tell you the truth, I'm stuck at a bottleneck myself. I wish to break through it and become a Hegemon! Alas, breaking through is far too difficult. That's why I truly wish for a chance to see your [Omega Sword Dao]. Perhaps it would give me new insights that would allow me to break through. I wouldn't presume to ask to view it for free; I can swear an oath to you that after viewing it, I won't transmit it to any others... and will accede to any request you make!"

"As far as treasures go, I have plenty as well," Emperor Goldface said.

"As far as treasures go... I probably have the most," Daoist Bluestone suddenly said.

Everyone fell silent. Not even the three Hegemons could argue against this statement. They all knew that Daoist Bluestone had once discovered a complete, undamaged Sithe relic site, and had thus let his Primaltwin undergo the Ritual Sacrificium to become a Black Emperor. The other treasures within the relic site had all fallen into Daoist Bluestone's hands as well. No one knew just how many treasures he had.

"Fellow Daoist Darknorth." Daoist Bluestone looked at Ning. "I only wish to view your [Omega Sword Dao] once, and I'll swear an oath to never show it off to any others! As for any requests you might have... just name them! I know that a grudge exists between you and Archon Silksnow. Just give me a nod, and I'll throw the full force of my power against the Emperors of Silksnow Fiend Palace. I'll wipe all of them out, including Silksnow and Bloodcloud, no matter what the cost is."

It would be very hard for Daoist Bluestone to kill Silksnow and Bloodcloud, but if he was truly willing to pay the price he still had a chance to accomplish it. Daoist Bluestone looked at Ning, his eyes blazing with eagerness.

He was a man who cared about nothing save the Dao. For the sake of the Dao, he was willing to sacrifice a great deal.

"As for my treasures... aside from a few treasures that are extremely important to me, I'll hand all of them over to you. In other words, over 99% of my treasures shall be yours," Daoist Bluestone said. "I only ask that

you let me view your [Omega Sword Dao].”

Ning was startled. To tell the truth, his original plan had merely been to divulge the existence of Daos that were superior to fused Supreme Daos. He hadn't been planning to say anything else. Ning was only planning to leave his [Omega Sword Dao] behind for the Three Realms to study, along with a few select disciples of his. He hadn't planned to make it public. That way, if he encountered a serious problem in the future, he would perhaps be able to use the [Omega Sword Dao] as a bargaining chip to negotiate with Hegemons.

For example, he could ask a Hegemon to swear an oath to forever help him protect the Three Realms, and so on and so forth. However... all of those things would only happen if he was unable to do something himself. It was a last-resort option! So long as Ning could handle things by himself, he wouldn't be willing to transmit the [Omega Sword Dao] to others.

But today, Ning began to waver when faced with Daoist Bluestone's offer. The man truly was sincere! Emperor Goldface had engaged in beautiful sophistry about 'sharing Daos' and 'exchanging insights', but Ning couldn't be bothered to negotiate with him. He had over three hundred Hegemonic legacies; why would he care about Emperor Goldface's?

Daoist Bluestone, in contrast, had been extremely sincere. He was willing to hand out over 90% of his treasures, and he didn't try to give Ning any pressure at all. In addition... in his heart, Ning deeply desired to find someone to reverse the flows of spacetime and revive his wife. Perhaps Daoist Bluestone's treasures would be enough to invite an Autarch to intercede.

Ning was going to choose a good number of disciples in the future and transmit the [Omega Sword Dao] to them. Letting Daoist Bluestone view it as well wasn't out of the realm of possibility.

# Chapter 18: Naked Extortion

“Daoist Bluestone has far more treasures than the rest of us.” Emperor Goldface smiled when he saw the offer Daoist Bluestone had made. “But... the [Omega Sword Dao] technique is just a technique; showing it off to a few more people won’t cause you to incur any losses, Daolord Darknorth. We naturally will make sure you are properly compensated for it, and you can always use a few more treasures, right? As a Daolord, you haven’t trained for all that long. You probably don’t have many treasures yet, eh?”

Ji Ning frowned. Why was this Emperor Goldface so irritating? “It’s not for you to lecture me on who I should teach my [Omega Sword Dao] to, Emperor Goldface!” Ning’s voice was ice-cold, devoid of his earlier humility.

Emperor Goldface’s face tightened “You...”

“I imagine that the three Hegemons, Emperor Goldisle, and Emperor Blackcloud all know what I want the most.” Ning didn’t even look at Emperor Goldface, instead turning to glance at the other major powers. “The greatest desire I have had ever since my earliest days of cultivating has been reviving my Dao-companion! However... only an Autarch can do it. Thus, if someone can give me enough treasure to ask an Autarch to intervene on my behalf, I’m willing to fully record every aspect of my Omega Sword Dao for him to view.”

“Ask an Autarch to intervene?” The three Hegemons traded a glance while the five Emperors fell silent. Ning watched carefully, only to see that all of the major powers were completely silent.

A while later, the distant Daoist Bluestone finally spoke out: “Fellow Daoist Darknorth, asking an Autarch to help out is no easy task. If all three Hegemons pooled all of their treasures together... they might have just barely enough to get an Autarch to intervene. Although I was fortunate enough to acquire some Sithe treasures, it probably isn’t enough to get an Autarch to intervene. The materials to create a Black Emperor, I already used up. The remaining treasures won’t be enough. Brightshore,

Windrain, Netherlily... would you three Hegemons be willing to work with me to come up with the sum needed to approach an Autarch? Darknorth, would that work for you?"

"That's fine." Ning pondered for a moment and nodded. "I'm fine with allowing Daoist Bluestone and the three Hegemons to view it together." For the sake of reviving Yu Wei, anything would be worth it.

"I can probably provide thirty to forty percent of the value needed to ask an Autarch to intervene." Daoist Bluestone looked towards the other three Hegemons. "Can you three jointly come up with the sixty or so percent needed?"

"That's too much." Hegemon Netherlily shook her head.

"That's a lot to ask. Invite an Autarch to help out? I've never even seen an Autarch!" Hegemon Windrain shook his head as well. "The price is too high. I think we'll pass."

"Yes, we'll pass." Hegemon Brightshore shook his head as well.

Daoist Bluestone was startled for a moment, then nodded his head in understanding. "I'm so embarrassed. I forgot that although this [Omega Sword Dao] is extremely enticing to me, due to my efforts to step into the Hegemon level, it is of much more limited use to the three of you."

Ning understood what was going on. Daoist Bluestone, Emperor Goldface, Empress Jade Phoenix, Emperor Blackcloud, and Emperor Goldisle all deeply desired to train to the Hegemon level. But the three Hegemons?

Their Daos would need to advance by an absolutely huge amount before they could reach the inconceivably powerful level of Autarchy. This 'step' was as vast as the gap between heaven and earth. Although the [Omega Sword Dao] was an extremely profound Dao, Ning had thus far only developed it to the fourth-step Daolord level. A mere Daolord-level [Omega Sword Dao] would be of limited assistance to Hegemons. It was virtually impossible for them to use Ning's insights to reach Autarchy.

It must be remembered that not even the combined treasures of all three

Hegemons would necessarily be enough to invite an Autarch to help out. To have the three of them jointly come up with sixty percent of the necessary funds represented them essentially bankrupting themselves. For them to sacrifice the majority of their treasures simply to view the [Omega Sword Dao]... the three Hegemons weren't willing to do such a thing.

"How embarrassing." Daoist Bluestone looked towards Ning. "Fellow Daoist Darknorth, I've already offered as much as I can! To ask an Autarch to help out is just far too difficult. Perhaps the only person belonging to the Flamedragon Realmverse qualified to do such a thing is Emperor Waveshift, but he's always been roaming the outside world. There's no way to even locate him... and even if you somehow found him, he probably wouldn't be willing to give you that much treasure. He might be weaker than Hegemons in actual combat, but he has definitely reached the Hegemon level in the Dao of Numerancy. Your [Omega Sword Dao] would be of limited use to him."

Ning understood. His [Omega Sword Dao] was of limited interest to the Hegemons; it was of far more interest to the Emperors who were trapped at a bottleneck and who sought to break through it to reach Hegemony.

"Well, you know my offer. I'm willing to give you the vast majority of my treasures, and I'll even be willing to do anything you ask me to do." Daoist Bluestone smiled. "If you decide to accept, you can come seek me out whenever you wish."

The Dao which Daoist Bluestone had chosen was the Dao of Black and White. Black and white... they encompassed all things, including both evil and good, darkness and light. They were all-embracing. His mindset was quite calm and even – acquire what he could, but not to force what he could not.

As a cultivator, his behavior had to match up to his Dao.

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Ning could sense Daoist Bluestone's sincerity. In fact, Daoist Bluestone hadn't tried to threaten him or give him the slightest bit of pressure. He was someone who even the three Hegemons were wary of, but he didn't

try to threaten Ning at all. Ning couldn't help but admire him for this... causing him to change his mind! Reviving Yu Wei via reversing the flows of spacetime would be incredibly expensive, and it would be very hard to accumulate all the treasures needed at once.

Since that wasn't possible... he would slowly accumulate the amount needed. Given that he already had the verdant azuresoul and the mutated omnigeddon bloodfruit tree, if he added in Daoist Bluestone's treasures... some more time and adventuring would give him a chance at acquiring what he needed.

"Brother Bluestone," Ning suddenly sent mentally to Daoist Bluestone. Daoist Bluestone's heart trembled, but he kept his face expressionless to ensure that no one could tell.

"After this conference concludes... let us discuss the Omega Sword Dao in private," Ning sent mentally.

"Very well. I, Bluestone, won't forget the kindness you have shown me," Daoist Bluestone sent back. He was extremely excited. Daoist Bluestone had already reached the maximum level he could reach in secret arts, divine abilities, or treasures. Although he had many treasures, none of them were really useful in increasing his level of power. To further refine and perfect his Dao was just far too difficult, which was why this inconceivable 'Omega Sword Dao' had truly stirred his interest.

Ji Ning was merely a Daolord of the Fourth Step, but the power of his Dao was already comparable to that of Daoist Bluestone's. Daoist Bluestone felt certain that this inconceivably profound Sword Dao would help open up a new path and new horizons for him.

The two spoke mentally in private, agreeing to chat after the conference but not revealing any hint of the decision outwardly. There were far too many who were interested in the [Omega Sword Dao], after all; even if Ning was to agree, he wouldn't agree publicly.

"Hmph." Emperor Goldface let out an angry snort as he rose to his feet. He pointed at Ning and yelled, "Fellow Daoist Bluestone has shown you great sincerity, but still you refuse? Where does a mere Daolord like

yourself get the gall to act so arrogantly before the three Hegemons and we five Emperors? Hmph. Everyone says that you are powerful, but I haven't had the chance to witness it myself. I really don't believe it. Why don't you show me if you really have the power to back up your arrogance."

Right after speaking, Emperor Goldface flew off his throne. His entire body began to glow with golden light that swept towards Ning like a crushing wave.

"What, you want to try and take it from me by force?" Ning smiled coldly.

"And what if I do? Let's see if you are strong enough to keep it for yourself!" Emperor Goldface had always been an extremely overbearing Emperor, far more so than Bluestone or Jade Phoenix. This was why even Ning had heard of him, despite so many aeons having gone past since those early days; he had caused quite a stir!

Jade Phoenix and the strongest of the three, Daoist Bluestone, were both very low-key to the point where Ning had never heard of them.

"Brother Darknorth?" Daoist Bluestone sent mentally to Ning.

"No need to intervene," Ning sent back. "This Goldface character was already starting to piss me off. I'm going to teach him a lesson."

"Haha, good! I quite dislike Goldface as well. Help me teach him a good lesson," Daoist Bluestone sent mentally.

Although Ning had defeated Bloodcloud and Silksnow, the battle had concluded far too quickly. He had defeated all the enemies in an extremely short period of time, and so the only ones to witness it in person had been Hegemon Brightshore and Emperor Goldisle. Even Hegemon Netherlily and Hegemon Windrain had been just a step too slow, much less the other Emperors. None of them had personally witnessed how Ning had defeated Silksnow's group, they had only watched as he had uprooted Silksnow Fiend Palace.

"Puny Daolord, I'll teach you a lesson and let you know that there's a

time for arrogance and a time for humility.” Emperor Goldface’s entire body glowed with golden light, but his gaze was as cold as ice. “When I’m around, you’d best show some humility.”

He was Emperor Goldface. Only the three Hegemons and Daoist Bluestone were truly superior to him. He held others in no regard at all.

“Soon, you’ll learn what humility actually means.” Ning rose to his feet as well. His body blurred as he activated [Three Heads, Six Arms] and all six Northbow swords flew into his hands.

# Chapter 19: Dispersed

“And who will teach me? You? You don’t even have a Universe treasure to your name!” Emperor Goldface smirked. “Makes sense, though. You are just a Daolord. It’ll be almost impossible for you to convince a Universe treasure to submit to you.”

“Even without a Universe treasure, I’ll still knock you flat on your ass,” Ji Ning said coldly.

“You’ll lose the attitude soon enough.” The look on Emperor Goldface’s face was growing uglier by the moment. He had already manifested six arms and wielded six long shuttles in his hands, each of which glowed with golden light. One of the six had an especially extraordinary aura. It looked semi-translucent, and the cold aura radiating from it caused Ning to instantly understand that it was a Universe treasure!

Of Emperor Goldface’s six weapons, one was a Universe treasure while the other five were most likely lifeblood weapons.

Of the major powers present, Hegemon Brightshore was on the best terms with Ning. He knew just how powerful Ning had become, as he had watched that earlier battle from start to finish. This was why Hegemon Brightshore did not move to stop this fight, while Ning had personally waved off Daoist Bluestone. As for the other major powers, they naturally didn’t move to prevent the fight. They were all curious and wanted to see just how powerful Ning’s [Omega Sword Dao] was.

Whoosh. Endless flower petals began to appear around Emperor Goldface. Some were red, some were black, some were blue, some were violet... the multi-colored petals all danced through the surrounding area, pressing down upon Ning.

Ning didn’t hesitate at all in unleashing his own secret arts. Countless arcs of sword-light appeared around him, while an incomparably beautiful pair of golden wings appeared right above him. The two worked together perfectly in accordance with the profound principles of the Omega Sword Dao – Yin-Yang, with the golden wings being escorted by countless arcs of

sword-light. It looked like a phoenix being escorted by countless lesser birds, hurtling through the skies and sweeping towards Emperor Goldface. At the same time, a massive heartworld projection descended as well, with a giant sword-mountain at the very center of it.

[Grand Diffraction Sword]! [Lumisword Godwings]! The two had been merged together via the Omega Sword Dao – Yin-Yang, then reinforced by the descent of Ning’s heartworld projection.

Boom! Boom! Boom! The countless flowers instantly began to crumble. A single strike was all it took for Emperor Goldface’s secret art to begin to crumble.

“My ‘Hundred Flowers Realm’.” A look of rage appeared on Emperor Goldface’s face. “Kill!”

Swish! In the end, secret arts were external sources of assistance. He, Emperor Goldface, was most skilled in close combat. His fame had been gained from his genuine abilities.

“Kill!” Ning charged forwards as well. Swish! Swish! Swish! Six tidal waves of sword-light clashed against the six shuttles. Both sides used very bizarre and rapid attacks. Ning was using his Omega Sword Dao – Shadowless and his Omega Sword Dao – Blood Drop. He was extremely confident in his close combat abilities. However, Ning’s face soon tightened. “He’s fast.”

Emperor Goldface walked the path of the Dao of Light, after all; in terms of raw speed, not even Daoist Bluestone was a match for him! In addition, the Dao of Light was omnipresent and omniscient. There were no openings at all, making it so that even Ning’s unpredictable sword-arts found it hard to break through Emperor Goldface’s wall of shuttle-light.

In addition... one of those six shuttles was a Universe treasure! Thus, some of Emperor Goldface’s attacks were incredibly powerful. This made it quite hard for Ning to battle him.

“Hm? He’s pursued speed to the utmost, focusing all of his efforts on it. Even I am inferior to Goldface in terms of speed... but I didn’t expect for Daolord Darknorth to be able to block these attacks.” Daoist Bluestone

laughed as he evaluated the progress of the battle.

“Goldface’s path is that of the Dao of Light, after all. He is indeed highly skilled in speed and agility.” Empress Jade Phoenix nodded as well.

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Ning and Emperor Goldface continued their furious battle, but this sort of fight was quite uncomfortable for Ning. It reminded him not to underestimate anyone who had nearly reached Hegemonic levels in the Dao. Even though he was suppressing his opponent with a heartworld projection and two secret arts, his foe was still able to move with unbelievable speed.

“Break for me!” Ning suddenly let out a furious roar, and his sword-stances changed. Previously, his attacks had been fast and bizarre, but now they completely changed to become incomparably brutal and explosive. Ning was now using his most overwhelming powerful attack, the Omega Sword Dao – Heavenbreaker.

Boom! Boom! Boom! His attacks exploded with power, causing the surrounding spatial fabric to collapse. The three spectating Hegemons hurriedly moved to stabilize spacetime, calming it down in the area around them. However, spacetime the area where Ning and Emperor Goldface were battling had been completely annihilated.

“What?!” Emperor Goldface suddenly turned pale as he saw a terrifying flood of sword-light crash towards him. This tsunami of sword-light was incomparably ferocious, so mighty as to cause even him to feel a tinge of fear. The only person in the Dao Alliance who had ever given him such a sense of pressure was Daoist Bluestone.

“Block!” Emperor Goldface hurriedly strove to defend against the attack.

Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Ning’s six swords continued to furiously chop out against him in accordance with the principles of the Omega Sword Dao – Heavenbreaker. Emperor Goldface was completely unprepared for this avalanche of attacks. He had reached an apex of speed and agility, and there was no one in the Dao Alliance who could compare to him in this regard. However, what he feared the most was having to

deal such overwhelmingly powerful attacks that he had to face head-on.

Daoist Bluestone had crushed him in just this manner. Long before Daoist Bluestone's Primaltwin had been transformed into a Black Emperor, the two had fought a public battle. Daoist Bluestone's staff-arts had struck down like titanic meteors, causing Emperor Goldface to turn completely pale with fear. This was why he had chosen to go into seclusion and had trained so painstakingly in private. He wanted to one day wipe away the humiliation of that loss.

Alas... he wasn't able to exceed Bluestone in power. When he heard that Daoist Bluestone's Primaltwin had been transformed into a Black Emperor, he had instantly felt despair.

"I told you that I'd knock you on your ass, and that's what I'm going to do." Ning's six Northbow swords howled down angrily like an endless storm of strikes. Delightful, truly delightful! No wonder so many cultivators chose Daos that were focused on crushing foes with overwhelming power. But of course, if one purely focused on such techniques then one's foes would be able to avoid your lethal strikes with superior agility. Ning's advantage lay in the fact that his Sword Dao was truly perfect. Foes were unable to avoid his strikes... and so even Emperor Goldface was being smashed down to the brink of defeat.

Swoosh! Emperor Goldface's face turned uglier and uglier to behold. With a swooshing sound, he transformed into a dazzling line of light that quickly retreated far away at incredible speeds.

The battle came to a temporary halt as Ning simply stared at the distant Emperor Goldface.

Emperor Goldface felt incredibly ashamed and enraged. He roared loudly, "Everyone, Daolord Darknorth is nothing more than a Daolord, but his sword-arts have already reached incredible heights. This [Omega Sword Dao] truly is extraordinary! I imagine that it would be very useful even for Hegemons; the three of you might gain much from studying it. However, he asks too much!"

"Daoist Bluestone offered him many treasures, but he still refuses to

show us his technique... and he dares act with such gall before us! Since he refuses to give us face, why should we give him any face? I think we should join forces to capture him and force him to hand over his [Omega Sword Dao]! Let's work together. He won't be able to escape!" Emperor Goldface roared.

Everyone fell silent.

Empress Jade Phoenix glanced at him, then turned to look at the other Emperors and Hegemons.

Hegemon Netherlily watched silently, not saying a word.

Emperor Blackcloud glanced at his peers as well.

The entire region fell into an unnatural, awkward stillness. Ning's face tightened slightly. He then turned to glance coldly at Emperor Goldface. If they all worked together, he would indeed be in quite a bit of trouble... but logically speaking, Hegemon Brightshore and Daoist Bluestone probably wouldn't act against him. If so, he wouldn't be in that much danger. He had yet to reveal his 'Shadowless body'. In truth, even if all of the major powers present struck against him simultaneously, the end result would at most be him being forced to disperse his body and reveal his invulnerable form.

"Enough!" Daoist Bluestone barked coldly. "Goldface, you go too far."

"I'm trying to help you out, Bluestone!" Emperor Goldface was rather irritated.

"I didn't ask for your help," Daoist Bluestone said flatly. Emperor Goldface instantly felt even angrier.

"Since we weren't able to come to terms, let us bring the conference to an end." Hegemon Brightshore spoke up as well, breaking the unnatural stillness. Just now, there had indeed been a few major powers who were intrigued by Goldface's suggestion... but since Hegemon Brightshore and Daoist Bluestone had both spoken up, that little ploy came to no fruition.

"Darknorth." Hegemon Brightshore glanced at Ning and smiled. "Come and visit whenever you like."

“If you are ever willing to let me view your [Omega Sword Dao], anything’s negotiable,” Hegemon Windrain said with a smile.

“We Ancient cultivators would also welcome a visit from you whenever you wish to come, fellow Daoist Darknorth.” Hegemon Netherlily rose to her feet as well. All three Hegemons were quite interested in Ning’s Omega Dao... but there was a limit to how much they were willing to pay for it.

“Hmph.” Emperor Goldface let out a cold snort, then waved his hand and tore a hole through spacetime. He stepped into the hole and then vanished.

Emperor Goldisle, Emperor Blackcloud, and Empress Jade Phoenix said a few words to Ning before leaving. This realmverse conference had come to an end, and the various major powers all departed.

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Ning and Daoist Bluestone simultaneously appeared at the peak of a mountain.

“Brother Bluestone.” Ning smiled.

“Brother Darknorth.” Daoist Bluestone smiled towards Ning as well. It was time to chat.

# Chapter 20: Whitethaw

A cool mountain wind howled past the two. Daoist Bluestone immediately began to swear an oath: “I, Bluestone, swear on my very life itself that I absolutely will not show fellow Daoist Darknorth’s [Omega Sword Dao] technique to anyone else...”

The words to the oath echoed within the mountains. Ji Ning smiled, then waved his hand and gently tapped the air. Instantly, a crystal formed from his godsense flew out from his finger. This godsense crystal contained extremely detailed information regarding Ning’s Omega Sword Dao, as well as images of how each stance was used and executed. Since Ning had already chosen to engage in this trade, he wasn’t going to be miserly about it.

“Godsense?” Daoist Bluestone was overjoyed upon seeing this. He immediately said, “Brother Darknorth, I really must thank you.” He had thought that Ning would simply record information about the technique into a jade slip for him to view. Who would’ve thought that Ning would actually use a small portion of his godsense to transmit the legacy to him? This was a form of transmission that was far more detailed than information written within a jade slip could ever be. Jade slip transmissions were via diagrams and characters, but godsense transmissions included many actual demonstrations.

“It is nothing more than a wisp of my godsense,” Ning said.

“Then here are the treasures I promised you.” Daoist Bluestone waved his hand. Whoosh. Whoosh. Whoosh. Instantly, a series of fist-sized drops of silver liquid appeared next to him. Every single drop was perfectly round. Despite Ning’s visual acuity, he could see no flaws in the perfect spherical shape of the silver drops... but he could vaguely make out light flowing inside the spheres!

“These are the ‘Silver Daolord bodies’ of the Sithe.” Daoist Bluestone pointed at the silver droplets. “If you undergo the Ritual Sacrificium, you can send your soul and truesoul into the liquid and become one with it,

transforming yourself into a Silver Daolord! Every single Silver Daolord has a body that contains Archon-level power, but your insights into the Dao will determine how much of it you can bring to bear.”

Ning knew this already. When he had been in the world inside the Stone Hellephant Wall, he had encountered those three clan elders. They had a very low level of insight into the Dao, and thus they weren’t able to unleash the amount of power which Silver Daolords should’ve been capable of.

However... Ning truly felt shocked when he saw those twenty-five drops. Those twenty-five drops represented twenty-five Silver Daolords!

“You have that much?” Ning said in surprise.

Daoist Bluestone nodded. “I originally acquired a total of twenty-nine drops. I gave four drops to others long ago, leaving behind these twenty-five. This is all I have.”

“Brother Bluestone, there’s no need for you to give them all to me,” Ning said hurriedly.

“They are of no use to me.” Daoist Bluestone shook his head. “The friends and family I truly cared about... they died long ago. Given my current level of power, these things are of no use to me.”

Ning couldn’t help but sigh. Indeed, the most powerful person in the entire Flamedragon Realmverse was Hegemon Brightshore. If you wanted to help train and strengthen a cultivator through using external tools, you would at most be able to help that person break through to become a Daolord of the First Step via using certain pills and treasures. However, it would be extremely difficult for that person to make any further breakthroughs. Thus, if one wished to become a Daolord of the Fourth Step then one would have to rely on his or her own abilities and slowly train away.

As for the Daomerge? Nobody could help you there! Not even the legendary Autarchs could help you with the Daomerge. If they could, then they would be able to ‘manufacture’ Hegemons on a large scale. The battle against the Sithe wouldn’t have been so difficult!

It was precisely because no one could help anyone else with the Daomerge that virtually no cultivators could live beyond the 108,000 chaos cycle limit! The major powers who were able to live past that were all generally quite lonely. At most, they would occasionally befriend other Eternal Emperors.

Some of them might feel regret... but most of them were able to see the bigger picture. Take Ning for example; if he was able to accompany his family and friends for 108,000 chaos cycles and then die alongside them, it would all be worth it.

“Aside from these Silver Daolord ‘bodies’, I have an even more important treasure to give you,” Daoist Bluestone said. “Silver Daolord bodies might be viewed as highly valuable by various organizations, but Autarchs probably won’t be interested in them. This treasure, however... even an Autarch might take some notice.” As he spoke, he waved his hand and caused a strange creature to appear at the top of the mountain. This creature was completely covered in slick white fur and was extremely muscular. It looked humanoid, and it had a very honest, amiable look on its face.

“Master.” The strange, white-furred creature bowed respectfully to Daoist Bluestone.

“This is a Sithe Protector,” Daoist Bluestone said. “It is a very special golem.”

“A golem?” Ning nodded slowly. As soon as he saw the creature, he could sense that it didn’t have any lifeforce within it. He had already guessed that it was a golem.

“The Sithe generally created three levels of combat golems. The weakest are comparable to supreme Daolords, the average ones are comparable to Archons, while the most powerful are comparable to Hegemons,” Daoist Bluestone said. “However... there are a few other rare types of golems. Extremely high-status or influential members of the Sithe who were weak would generally be assigned Protectors!”

A reminiscent look was in Daoist Bluestone’s eyes. “Come to think of it...

its previous guardian was a fairly high-status individual who was both greedy and afraid of death. That's why he left behind so many treasures for me to find. A pity... if I had found those things earlier, then my little sister..."

"Haha, but I digress." Daoist Bluestone came back to his senses and said towards Ning, "You can bind this Sithe Protector. It will recognize you as your master, and it is very good at being a guardian. With it by your side while you are out adventuring, it might be able to save your life if something bad happens. In the more distant future, you can give it to an Autarch. The Autarch would probably be interested in it, as these Sithe Protectors are quite rare."

Ning nodded.

"Whitethaw, from this day forth your new master shall be brother Darknorth." Daoist Bluestone looked at the white-furred creature.

"Master..." The white-furred creature was a bit reluctant to part from him.

"Brother Bluestone, this golem should still be of use to you, right?" Ning couldn't help but speak out. Daoist Bluestone's Primaltwin was a Black Emperor and was out adventuring; it truly had the power of a Hegemon and didn't need protecting. Daoist Bluestone's true body, however, wasn't that powerful. If this Protector was meant for guarding high-level Sithe, its protective abilities had to be exceptional. Why wouldn't Daoist Bluestone keep it for himself?

"No need to worry about that. I have other options available," Daoist Bluestone said. Ning nodded, no longer arguing.

"The main treasures of interest are the Sithe Protector and the Silver Daolord bodies. The other treasures are of little use to you and no use to an Autarch." Daoist Bluestone casually tossed a gourd to Ning. "There are some Dao-seals and other treasures here of varying power. The best four or five are Hegemonic in power; you can go ahead and gift them to your friends, I suppose."

"Alright." Ning smiled and accepted the treasures. These things truly

were of limited use to him, as even a strike from an actual Hegemon would not be able to injure him. In fact, it might not even be enough to force him to reveal his invulnerable form! However, they would make fine gifts for friends, family, or disciples.

Ning had acquired quite a few treasures from the Eternal Emperors he had slain. Most of those things would be of limited use to him. At his level, there were fewer and fewer items that were of use to him.

“Is there anything you need?” Daoist Bluestone asked. “If there is, just tell me. I already told you that I can help you deal with Archon Silksnow and Emperor Bloodsnow. It might be difficult, but given enough time I’ll be able to handle it.”

“No need for now.” Ning smiled. “If in the future I fail in the Daomerge... then before I die, there will be a few things I would like to request of you, brother Bluestone. I hope, when the time comes, you won’t refuse.”

“A minor matter.” Daoist Bluestone nodded.

“Oh, right. Brother Bluestone, do you have a detailed map of the Terror Starsea?” Ning asked. He needed to accumulate treasures... which meant in the future he would definitely adventure through the Terror Starsea! The most detailed maps were kept highly secret by the various major powers, and they wouldn’t casually reveal those maps to others. During the Dawn War, the cultivator civilizations had been very unified. Now, however, the Sithe had been extinguished. There was no external pressure to force the various cultivators to share everything selflessly with each other.

“Haha, you are asking the right person!” Daoist Bluestone laughed loudly. “That great fortune I encountered, I encountered while adventuring within the Terror Starsea. My Primaltwin often adventures within the Terror Starsea as well. I’m not sure if I know more about the Terror Starsea than everyone else in the Flamedragon Realmverse, but I definitely rank in the top three for sure.”

“Here. Here’s a detailed map of the Terror Starsea.” Daoist Bluestone tossed out a golden scroll. He added, “But you have to be careful. The

Terror Starsea was one of the battlefields where the Dawn War was fought. Many major powers on both sides fought there and fell there. Even Hegemons perished in large numbers! The place is filled with danger, and many of those dangers can annihilate even Hegemons with ease. You have to be cautious.”

“Understood.” Ning unfurled the star map and took a look at it, quickly memorizing its contents.

“Haha. If there’s nothing else, let us part ways now. If there’s anything you need, you can seek me out through the Dao Alliance.” Daoist Bluestone waved his hand, causing the distorted field of spacetime to return to its normal calm. He then ripped open a dimensional hole next to him.

“Farewell,” Ning said. He watched as Daoist Bluestone stepped into the dimensional tear.

Ning stood there by himself atop the mountain. He nodded slowly. “It is time to visit the Azureflower Estate... but prior to that, I need to pay a second visit to the Stone Hellephant Wall.”

# Chapter 21: Archon Silksnow's Plan

The conquest of the Sacred City of Silksnow had concluded long ago. As time flowed on, word began to spread through the Endless Territories. By now, even many ordinary Daolords had gradually begun to hear the word. By now, even the World-level cultivators of the Twelve Palaces of the Brightshore Kingdom had heard the stunning news about Daolord Darknorth.

Countless cultivators had been completely stunned by this this revelation. News of the battle had stirred waves in the realmverse. Everyone was talking about how 'Daolord Darknorth crushed over twenty Emperors by himself' and how 'Darknorth blew through eight Eternal Emperors and annihilated them with ease, then sent Archon Silksnow fleeing and the others fleeing for their lives'. They spoke of how 'Daolord Daolord is close to the Hegemon level of power', how 'Daolord Darknorth has surpassed the eight lords of the Sacred Cities in power', and how he was the 'number one Daolord to ever exist'.

All sorts of flattery could be heard. All of the cultivators felt proud that one of them, a Daolord, could achieve such a level of power.

At first, those who heard the news were rather puzzled. They couldn't believe that it was true. However, as more and more information spread out, they began to understand that all of these stories were real! They naturally began to spread the stories even more vigorously, and the legend of Darknorth began to spread even more energetically than the legends of Emperor Heartsword had! Emperor Heartsword had been an Eternal Emperor, after all... but Darknorth was just a Daolord!

How was it that a Daolord had reached such an incredible level of power? It could be said that within just a few short centuries, everyone within the Endless Territories was talking about the legendary Daolord Darknorth! He was the topic of every get-together. It could be said that Daolord Darknorth's fame and reputation was now second only to the three legendary Hegemons!

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A desolate, barren planet. Every so often, a few flickers of flame would appear on the surface of the planet.

The skinny, white-browed Archon Silksnow had hidden himself within a valley inside this planet. When the flames moved close, they would naturally part before him. He sat there in the lotus position within the valley, a cold and dark look on his face.

“Damn him. He’s forced me to go into hiding at the very margins of the Endless Territories.” Archon Silksnow’s face was downcast, but there was nothing he could do. If he was a bit closer to Ning, both would be able to sense each other due to the resonance between their realmship parts! His only choice was to hide far, far away. He knew that he absolutely could not reveal the fact that he owned a realmship.

Even Nign and Ninedust merely believed that Archon Silksnow also had a realmship part... they had no idea that what Archon Silksnow had was a complete, albeit damaged, realmship that was actually usable!

This was a secret which Archon Silksnow had never made public. He was the only person who knew this secret. If it was ever made public, he would be in serious trouble. Most likely, even the three Hegemons would hunt him down with all the resources available to him, seeking to kill him no matter what the cost. A complete realmship would allow one to easily travel between realmverses and otherverses. It was definitely every bit as valuable as Crimsonwave Temple!

But of course, Archon Silksnow’s realmship was damaged and needed repairing.

“Darknorth. Darknorth!” Archon Silksnow’s eyes were filled with hatred and malice. He was by nature a savage and violent man. It was this brutal nature of his that caused so many evil Daolords and Emperors to choose to follow him.

Emperor Bloodcloud was just as strong as him, but he wasn’t as decisive. He wasn’t determined enough or ruthless enough when necessary. Only Archon Silksnow was ruthless and dominating enough to become the

leader of their group.

“No rush, no rush. What I need to do is to repair the realmship as soon as possible. Once I repair it, I’ll be able to use it to escape with ease. Not even Hegemon Brightshore would be able to stop me, despite his unparalleled mastery of the Dao of Spacetime.” Archon Silksnow felt quite confident, because a fully operational realmship was truly unmatched in terms of tunnel through spacetime. It vastly surpassed Hegemon Brightshore in this regard.

“Right. If I can’t handle Darknorth, I should go find Ninedust. Ninedust has a realmship part on him as well.” Archon Silksnow nodded slowly. “Perhaps the part he holds will be enough to repair my realmship.”

“Ninedust... hmph. He seems to be extremely good friends with Darknorth. If I can’t kill Darknorth, I’ll kill Ninedust. Hmph. Let’s see what Darknorth can do about it.” Archon Silksnow’s eyes flickered with dangerous light, but he then frowned. “However... I need to first locate Ninedust. Based on the information I uncovered, he entered the Terror Starsea a long time ago. How suicidal of him! Still... the places he would dare enter would probably be of no danger to me.”

“To the Terror Starsea I go!” Archon Silksnow decided to head to the Terror Starsea to hunt down Ninedust and take the realmship part.

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For now, Ning had left all his troubles and worries behind... because he had already left the Flamedragon Realmverse. He had entered the Great Dark and was hurrying towards the Stone Hellephant Wall.

“Here we are.” Now that he was a Daolord of the Fourth Step, he was far faster than before. Just a short while after heading out, he reached the Stone Hellephant Wall.

The entrance to the enormous silver Stone Hellephant Wall remained open. Prior to Ning and Ninedust’s original arrival, the local cultivators had long ago searched the insides of the Stone Hellephant Wall and had realized that there was no way out. Thus, even though it had been hundreds of millions of years since Ning had left the Stone Hellephant

Wall, not a single one of them had exited via the entranceway! Even if they did, though... when faced with the endless darkness of the Great Dark, they probably would've been completely lost.

Whoosh. Ning flew into the passageway, quickly descending upon that world inside. Darknorth Palace remained the preeminent power of this planet... and no one even realized that Ning had already left and then returned.

Boom! The headquarters of the Fumo clan, one of the 'three great clans'. This was a place protected by many barriers and a Sithe disc, but an enormous explosion suddenly rang out as a terrifying, watery streak of sword-light tore straight through the layers of barriers with overwhelming power.

"What?!"

"W-what's going on?!" The countless Fumo clan members were all shocked and terrified.

Sithe discs were used by the Sithe to construct and stabilize large-scale barrier formations. They were generally used in sets of nine, twelve, or more in order to set up the formations. These locals, however, didn't really know how to use them properly. They didn't have enough of the discs anyhow, and so they merely used a single disc... and with Daolord-level energy, at that! Despite that, the barriers were still strong enough to defend against ordinary Archon-level foes.

If they had eleven more discs and used them properly with an Emperor controlling them, not even ten Hegemons working together would be able to burst through the barriers! Alas... the original attacker had been Autarch Bolin. He had blown through the formations with ease, destroying everything with impunity. Quite a few Sithe discs had been destroyed by his assault. Autarch Bolin wouldn't even bother to look at ordinary treasures; he only took away the precious ones, such as the complete realmship.

"Spare us!"

"Spare us, Lord Darknorth!" The Fumo clan members finally saw the

white-robed youth standing in midair.

“Hand over all of your Emperor-class golems,” Ning called out from the skies. “You are permitted to keep a single royal golem.”

“Understood.” Although the Fumo clan members were both terrified and reluctant to comply, no one dared to voice an objection. In the past, they had been the rulers of this planet... but they were completely unable to fight back against Ji Ning. Even their protective Sithe disc had been torn apart. How could they even think about resisting?

Soon, Ning departed with the Emperor-class golems and the royal golems (comparable to Daolords of the Fourth Step) in tow. He also took away many of their magic treasures. The Fumo clan now only had a single royal golem left to them. This was now the most powerful force they had to muster. With it, they would probably be able to stay strong... but if they spread themselves too thin and attracted an entire host of enemies, they would still be doomed.

Ning couldn't be bothered with intervening in the lives of the local cultivators on this planet. He was now on a completely different level compared to before. He simply blew through the barriers protecting the three great clans, then swept them clean of their Emperor-class golems, royal golems, and treasures.

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Now that no one had access to any Emperor-class golems, no clan on this planet was overwhelmingly more powerful than any other clan. No one was invincible any longer... and so, the planet entered a brand new era.

Ning once more entered the secret Sithe ruins located within this planet.

“Whitethaw, guard the entrance.” Ning waved his hand, causing that honest-looking Sithe Protector to appear by his side.

“Yes, Master,” Whitethaw said respectfully, then stood in front of the entranceway to the ruins.

Ning nodded. He had once sparred against this golem... and even when

he fought with all his power, he still wasn't able to seize any advantage over it! Whitethaw was like an immovable mountain. Even if a Hegemon came, he would still be able to protect Ning for a time. With Whitethaw watching the entrance, there was no way any of the golems within the ruins would be able to escape.

Whoosh. Ning transformed into a streak of light as he flew into the shattered palace ruins. A number of Emperor-class golems secretly watched him from behind the barriers that were still active within the vast ruins. For now, Ning ignored them as he flew straight towards the core regions.

“You again?!”

“Darknorth, how dare you return!” Four streaks of light flew over towards Ning. It was the four Archon-class golems.

Ning slowed down when he saw them, then smiled. “My four old friends, join me in leaving these ruins. Life here is far too boring. The outside world is much more interesting.”

# Chapter 22: Sparrowfiend Crystals

Even Ji Ning had to sigh in amazement at the aura which the four golems off in the distance emanated. All those years ago, he had been forced to fight with all his power to just barely tie down one of them, and by relying on defensive sword-arts at that! Every single one of the four golems brought him a tremendous sense of pressure, even though they were slightly weaker than Archon Silksnow.

Back then, that had been more than enough power to truly crush Ning.

“Darknorth, you actually dare to return? Do you have a new trick up your sleeve or a powerful helper?” The four golems flew over, actually feeling quite excited inside. Life without any opponents to fight was truly boring and lonely, and they were never permitted to leave the restricted area they were guarding.

“No helpers. I just wanted to invite you to come out with me.” Ning waved his hands, causing two of his Northbow swords to fly out from the sheath and into his palms. Ning then strolled forwards, almost like he was taking a walk through a park.

“Let’s go.” The four golems exchanged a glance, then immediately charged towards Ning.

Ning’s twin swords transformed into two streams of water, easily piercing past his enemy’s scimitars and defenses. The Northbow swords became extremely soft and flexible, easily wrapping around and completely tying up one of the golems. Ning murmured softly, “In you go.” The golem was drawn into his estate-world.

This caused the other three golems to immediately feel shocked. One against four, Darknorth was able to capture one of the golems with ease? The difference in power between them was enormous!

It must be remembered that Ning was able to defeat even Archon Silksnow with a single blow! When faced with these four golems who had weaker techniques and weaker insights into the Dao, gaining victory was simplicity itself.

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Ning fought for the amount of time needed to boil a kettle of tea before finally capturing the last of the four golems. The reason it took this long was because two of the golems had transformed into invulnerable forms, making them quite difficult to catch. Ning was forced to use his secret arts and his heartworld projection to furiously deplete their energy stores. Only when their energy stores were depleted was he able to capture them.

Ning bound all four of the golems to himself, making himself their master.

“Master, you aren’t going to wipe out our golem-spirits, are you?”

“Haha, no need to worry. The three great clan leaders of this world were worried about their secrets leaking out, which was why they wiped out those golem-spirits in the past. I’ve already wiped these ruins clean; what would be the point of doing that? And, if I did, the new golem-spirits would start at a very low level of intelligence and insight. It would take forever for them to reach your current level of power.” Ning smiled. “I’m not going to cause trouble for myself like that.”

Only then did the four golems calm down. In truth, they were indeed willing to accompany Ning. That way, they wouldn’t be forever trapped within this tiny little area! However, they had to obey the orders of their masters to resist any intruders with all their might. To be able to leave would be absolutely blissful! However, it would be a tragedy if their golem-spirits were erased; to them, this was the equivalent of a cultivator losing his truesoul.

“Master, when can we leave?” the tall, skinny golem asked.

“Soon. I’m going to do an in-depth sweep of this place and take away all of the Emperor-class golems. After that, I’ll go with you,” Ning said with a laugh. “Ninedust and I already swept through all of the treasures in the ruins, including the various corpses. There probably isn’t much left.”

Last time, Ning and Ninedust had done a fast sweep of the area before leaving. This time, they were planning to do a more thorough inspection.

“Master, this warship was named Tigerhill. It was an extremely powerful weapon of war which the Sithe used in their conquests. However, the main systems of the warship have been completely destroyed, and many of its critical components have been taken away,” the axe-bearing golem said. “Although not many valuable treasures are left, based on what we know there should be one of exceeding importance.”

“Exceeding importance?” Ning’s eyes lit up. These four golems were responsible for guarding the restricted areas; they naturally knew quite a bit.

“Yes. Master, as you may know this place used to house over thirty thousand Sithe. There were many barriers protecting it, but the barriers stretched out to cover a great amount of area and were extremely strong. They had to have energy sources, right?” The tall, thin golem continued, “The energy source is located below the entire palace complex.”

Ning revealed a look of delight. “Lead the way!” Ning instructed.

“Yes.” Golems were absolutely loyal and devoted to their masters. They previously were completely devoted to the Sithe. Now that Ning had bound them, they were completely devoted to Ning.

“Master, the energy sources for the barriers consisted of a total of eight ‘sparrowfiend gems’. They are located in eight different parts of the palace complex. This place here is the very first one.” The tall, skinny golem pointed to a tattered palace off in the distance. “If you dig through the ground, you should be able to find a sparrowfiend gem somewhere within a hundred kilometer radius.”

“Ah.” Ning nodded.

“Let me do the digging.” The spear-wielding golem looked at Ning, who nodded. The spear-wielding golem immediately plunged his spear into the ground, breaking through the layers of stone and tearing through the ground. The palace had already been in very bad shape. Soon, an enormous crater had been dug in its foundation, revealing a sparrowfiend gem at the bottom.

The giant crater held a black altar which was covered by countless runes,

and the runes all led to a completely blood-red gem. The vague outline of a bird could be seen flying within it.

“When Autarch Bolin wrecked this place, he destroyed all of the formations, making the energy sources irrelevant.” Ning nodded slowly. “Right. Tell me more about the sparrowfiend gems. Are they very valuable?”

“Highly valuable,” the spear-wielding golem said. “The Tigerhill was divided into a ‘combat zone’ and a ‘habitation zone’. We are currently within the habitation zone, and it was powered by this sparrowfiend gem! The outer layer was the ‘combat zone’ and it was more important, meant for combating against opponents. Thus, it used the even more powerful ‘dragonprime stones’. A single dragonprime stone is worth more than ten sparrowfiend gems, and the combat zone had a total of ten of them. They made the Tigerhill completely invulnerable, allowing it to easily travel between realmverses and slaughter countless foes.”

“Dragonprime stones?” Ning’s eyes lit up.

“I imagine the dragonprime stones were taken long ago. They are simply too obvious and eye-catching. Amongst the Sithe, a single dragonprime stone is enough to trade for a Black Emperor body,” the spear-wielding golem said. “However, it is probably impossible for cultivators to unleash the true power of a dragonprime stone. All you can do is perhaps plant them into some of the Sithe warships and vessels which the Sithe left behind.”

Ning nodded slowly. He couldn’t help but ask, “Why are the Sithe so much more advanced than us cultivators in so many areas?”

“The Sithe had an extremely stable foundation. Artificing, construct-making, blacksmithing... they vastly surpassed the cultivator civilizations in all these areas. They created countless golems on our level! However, the ‘Autarchs’ of the cultivators were simply too powerful. Although the Sithe did have supreme powers who were capable of battling Autarchs, they were still weaker... and the cultivator civilizations continued to give birth to more and more experts. One batch would die, followed by the rise

of another batch. If the war dragged on for long enough, the Sithe would invariably be the ones to lose.” The greataxe-wielding golem chuckled. “This is what we conjectured when we chatted amongst ourselves. To be honest, the Tigerhill was wrecked long ago by one of those Autarchs, and so we aren’t sure why or how the Sithe ended up losing. All we know is that the Sithe feared the Autarchs very much, and they also feared how quickly the cultivator civilizations propagated.”

Ning nodded. Every planet and star was capable of giving birth to extremely large numbers of cultivators. If one chose to transmit the best legacies and techniques to them while holding nothing back, it would definitely be possible to allow a large number of powerful cultivators to arise from each world.

Now that the cultivator civilizations had actually won, they became stingy and miserly in transmitting techniques to others! Acquiring supreme legacies was extremely difficult, which was why the rate at which powerful cultivators rose had slowed down dramatically compared to before.

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The barriers here had long ago been destroyed, making it quite easy for Ning to take away the sparrowfiend gems. Six of them were acquired in rapid order, with the seventh taking a bit more time. As for the eighth, the barriers protecting it were in fairly good shape, and they had the ‘damage reflection’ property. Ning had his most powerful servant, the Sithe Protector Whitethaw, personally attack the barriers. Whitethaw was sent flying back from the explosion, but had of course managed to endure the damage with ease.

“There we go.” After six hours of hard work, all eight sparrowfiend gems were in Ning’s hands. Ning revealed a look of delight. This was the greatest fortune he had acquired within the Stone Hellephant Wall. The eight sparrowfiend gems were probably close to a Black Emperor in value.

“An unexpected windfall.” Ning was very happy. He then had his Sithe Protector and the four other golems to work together and quickly capture

the various Emperor-class golems who were hiding throughout the runes. The Emperor-class golems were simply too weak. Ning didn't even want to bother with them himself... but he still cared about them.

After spending over half a month destroying quite a few barriers, Ning managed to capture a total of eighty-six Emperor-class golems. There were only six places within the ruins that he was unable to destroy, and the few remaining golems were all hiding within these final six places of refuge.

"Haha, what a fortune." Ning was jubilant. Virtually every single Sith ruin was a treasure trove. Ning's gains from this one were perhaps just a bit less than what Daoist Bluestone had gained from his, since there was no 'Black Emperor body' here. Yes, the sparrowfiend gems were quite valuable, but that was in the eyes of the Sithe. In the eyes of cultivators, Black Emperors were more valuable. Still... he had gained quite a bit.

"Mm. Now, it's time to head off to the Azureflower Estate. If I can gain another fortune from there, I might just be able to ask an Autarch to help out." Ning was filled with eagerness.

The Azureflower Estate was definitely another treasure trove. However, whether or not he would actually be able to take any treasures out of it was up to his own abilities. The natives of the three great clans had long ago discovered the Sithe ruins here, but they had been unable to take much from it. Ning himself had only acquired these four Archon-level golems and the eight sparrowfiend gems because of his dramatic increase in power.

"Let's go." Ning once more silently departed from the Stone Hellephant Wall. It would be a very long time before he would ever return to this place. As for the internal struggles within this place... he would leave it to them to resolve.

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He tore through spacetime repeatedly as he headed back to the Three Realms.

Outside the Three Realms. The white-robed Ning and the black-robed Primaltwin Ning were facing each other. Ning waved his hand, tossing out

a mirror. This was an estate-world treasure that held the four Archon-class golems as well as many Emperor-class golems and Sithe disks, as well as other treasures. Ning was leaving them here for the Three Realms. Ning gave the four Archon-class golems permission to wander through the Three Realms. If he was to perish, these four Archon-class golems would serve as a hidden trump card for the Three Realms.

The Three Realms held far too many friends and family who he cared about. His parents and his daughter were incredibly important to Ning. He naturally had to leave some treasures behind in the Three Realms to protect it. Only then would he feel confident in going out adventuring.

“The Azureflower Estate.” Ning stared off into the primordial chaos of the void, his eyes filled with the desire to do battle.

# Chapter 23: Returning to the Azureflower Estate

The Azureflower Estate wasn't that far away from the Three Realms. Given Ji Ning's abilities to traverse spacetime, he was able to reach the region of pure emptiness that was outside the Azureflower Estate.

Rumble... an invisible wave of power was fluctuating and sweeping through this area, forcing even the prime essences of the universe to stay away. Ning couldn't help but feel stunned once again when he beheld this sight. He had seen it before, and he was now much more powerful than before... but he still felt this was utterly inconceivable.

"To be able to permanently repel the prime essences of the Chaosverse..." Ning now was at a much higher level of understanding with regards to the Dao and was beginning to understand: "This sort of ability vastly surpasses anything a Hegemon could possibly accomplish. Most likely, not even Otherverse Lords are capable of it. Could it be that an Autarch created the Azureflower Estate? That means the origins of the Nine Chaos Seals are even more incredible than I believed."

At the same time, Ning was puzzled. Early on, the Nine Chaos Seals had been tremendously useful to Ning. Now that he was a Daolord of the Fourth Step, his divine power and his Immortal energy had become even purer, as had his azureflower mist energy. However, at the highest levels of cultivation, cultivators primarily relied on their insights into the Dao. By now, the azureflower mist energy was of fairly negligible assistance to him.

So... why did the Autarch create a technique like this, then work to guide cultivators of the technique to this place?

Swoosh. Ning flew through the emptiness of the void at incredible speeds. He passed through it, entering the region of golden mist. Although he still saw deluxe hellgold on his way in, he was now in a much different place financially than before. He had already slaughtered quite a few powerful Emperors; the deluxe hellgold was of no interest to him

anymore.

“Here we are.” Ning slowly decelerated before coming to a halt in front of the gates of the towering, ancient estate. The words ‘azure’ ‘flower’ continued to hang right above the gates to the Azureflower Estate, radiating an aura of beautiful sanctity.

“Here I am again.” Ning smiled as he advanced. Ruuuumble. The gates to the ancient estate once more opened by themselves as Ning advanced.

Ning strolled inside. He glanced at the three fruit trees within the estate, then waved his hand and caused his Protector golem, Whitethaw, to appear. Whitethaw’s massive body appeared right next to Ning. The golem called out respectfully, “Master.”

“Stay behind me.” Ning said rather seriously, “This place is probably filled with many dangers.” This was most likely a place which an Autarch had spent time and effort constructing, going so far as to capture a large number of Emperors and bring them here. Clearly, the creator of this place had put much more effort into the Azureflower Estate than Autarch Bolin had into the various beastworlds.

“Understood,” Whitethaw said respectfully.

Ning advanced with Whitethaw watching his back. The two quickly reached that bridge once again.

“Milord Emperors! Long time no see.” Ning smiled as he looked at the two gray-robed elders who were seated facing each other within the grasslands up ahead.

“Eh?” The two gray-robed figures turned to glance at Ning. The blood-eyed elder smirked: “Kid, you came back.”

“That was pretty fast. We barely had time to finish a few games of chess before you came back, my young friend.” The silver-eyed elder was quite courteous.

Ning was speechless. A few games of chess? Fine... for immortal Emperors who were trapped here for all eternity, perhaps he really hadn’t spent much time cultivating.

“The Azureflower Estate has continued to attract my interest. After cultivating for many years, I felt that I was perhaps strong enough to pass its trials, and so I came to give it another try,” Ning said.

“Judging from your aura... you haven’t completed the Daomerge and become an Emperor yet, have you?” the silver-eyed elder asked.

“I have not.” Ning shook his head. Eternal Emperors all had auras that were tinged with the hint of inextinguishable eternity.

“Ugh. I already told you last time, although a few extremely talented Daolords of the Fourth Step might be able to defeat the two of us, things will only become even more dangerous as you advance! If you aren’t careful, you will die. I really urge you to at least complete the Daomerge before you try your luck again.” The silver-eyed elder let out a sigh. “You are being far too rash.”

“I want to give it a try.” Ning chuckled. “Maybe I’ll succeed. If I don’t, I’ll come back later.”

“Hmph. If you insist on dying... let me see just how strong you have become.” The blood-eyed elder walked straight towards Ning as he was saying these words.

“Sure, let’s give it a try.” Ning walked towards him as well.

“Last time, you were completely unable to resist my power. Quite a few years have gone by since then. I hope I’ll be pleasantly surprised by your improvements. Otherwise, this will be boring.” A baleful look flickered in the old man’s blood-red eyes.

The silver-eyed elder didn’t try to stop him this time. As he saw it, Ning should’ve already learned just how powerful the two of them were from his first visit. Given that the kid was back, the kid was probably was confident in his chances. If the kid still ended up being killed, he’d have no one to blame save his own dumb self.

Ning walked past the bridge and onto the grasslands.

“Go.” The blood-eyed elder waved his right sleeve, sending it sweeping through the skies and sending a surge of overwhelming power towards

Ning.

Ning responded by casually waving his palm as well. Boom! Ning's palm struck out very casually, but it contained the dominance of his Omega Sword Dao – Heavenbreaker.

Both attacks were extremely dominating in nature, and they came together in a thunderous clash. The blood-eyed elder was instantly sent flying backwards like a streak of light, smashing hard against a distant mountain. The barrier protecting the mountain instantly flickered but was completely undamaged. The blood-eyed elder, however, was 'planted' into the barrier in an extremely ungainly manner. It took him a full second before he landed.

He stared at Ning in disbelief. "Y-you..."

"Ah, a golem body?" Ning nodded slightly. He didn't have any desire to kill these two Emperors at all; they were rather pitiful, after all, having been captured and imprisoned here for so long.

"You were able to reach such a level of power?" The silver-eyed woman walked over as well, stunned.

"I do alright." Ning nodded. These two guardians were significantly weaker than even Ninedust. Ning was able to effortlessly defeat them with just a few punches and kicks.

"You didn't use any treasures. You don't even have glove-type treasures on your hands!" The blood-eyed elder stared at Ning in disbelief. "You were able to crush me with ease using your palms alone. Not even the most powerful supreme Daolords are able to do such a thing. You should be the most powerful Daolord of the current era."

Ning nodded. "I am." But it wasn't just of the 'current era'; he was the most powerful Daolord to have ever existed.

"I'm completely convinced by your power." The blood-eyed elder pointed at the passageway behind him, then said coldly, "Go on inside. The estate is filled with even greater dangers. Beating me doesn't mean you'll necessarily survive them."

“Be careful, my young friend. If you feel that you cannot overcome your foes, you should immediately retreat and flee,” the silver-eyed elder said. “So long as you survive, you’ll have other chances in the future.”

“Understood.” Ning said, “Whitethaw, let’s go.”

“Yes, Master.” The Sithe Protector silently fell in line behind Ning. The blood-eyed elder and the silver-eyed elder watched as the two of them headed into the passageway.

“Do you think the kid will make it?” the blood-eyed elder said softly.

“He’s extraordinarily powerful, even amongst supreme Daolords,” the silver-eyed elder said. “It’ll be extremely hard for him to make it into the depths of the estate... but he should be able to keep himself alive.”

“Hard to say.” The blood-eyed elder smirked. “Overconfidence can easily lead to death.”

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As Ning walked along the passageway, he soon reached a point where he saw an azure stone plaza off in the distance... and in front of the plaza was a giant palace.

The plaza was covered with over a hundred figures who were broken up into groups of two or three. Some were seated, some were facing each other, some were drinking, some were chatting. When Ning and Whitethaw appeared, all of them turned to stare at him. The invisible aura of might emanating from them caused even Ning to tremble. He could instantly tell that these hundred-plus Emperors were all extraordinary figures.

Whoosh. A white-bearded elder suddenly appeared on the stairs before the plaza. The white-bearded elder was dressed in deep blue robes and emanated an aura of ice. He looked at Ning: “I am the spirit of this estate, and have been guarding it on Master’s orders.”

Ning was briefly startled. Still, almost all ‘major powers’, including both weaker ones like Emperor Waveshift as well as supreme ones like Autarch Bolin or the creator of the Azureflower Estate would generally leave

behind estate-spirits. This was the best way to ensure that their goals and orders were followed.”

“This estate is protected by three deadly trials, each one deadlier than the last. The one you just passed on the outside was the simplest trial, the first trial,” the white-haired elder said. “If you can pass all three trials, you will encounter no further dangers.”

“According to what Master said, you’ll earn certain things each time you pass a trial.” The white-haired elder tossed out a jade-green leaf towards Ning. “This is a ‘Lifeblood’ Dao-seal; it can revive virtually all Daolords.”

Ning was startled. It seemed as though there were others besides Emperor Maniseal who were capable of creating these types of Dao-seals.

“However... Daolords of the Fourth Step who trained in one of the legendary Omega Daos have completely surpassed all other Daolords and are on a completely different level. A Samsara-class Dao-seal of this kind is unable to revive them. They must use an Eternal-class ‘Lifeblood’ Dao-seal if they wish to be revived,” the white-bearded elder said.

Ning narrowed his eyes. Omega Dao? The spirit of the Azureflower Estate actually knew of the existence of Omega Daos?

# Chapter 24: Another Daolord

“This ‘Omega Dao’,” Ji Ning began to say, but he was interrupted.

“Don’t ask any questions. If you pass the second trial, you’ll learn about it... and if you fail, you aren’t worth of learning about it.” The white-bearded elder remained as cold and distant as ever: “You are a Daolord. To pass the second trial, you need merely face and pass through ten of the weakest Emperors here. As long as you can make it to the palace gates up ahead, you’ll have passed. Also... your golem is not permitted to interfere. If it does, it’ll count as your loss.”

Ning nodded slowly. “Understood.”

The white-haired old man transformed into an illusory blur, flying across the entire plaza and landing in front of the gates of the palace. There, he watched what would unfold with calmness.

“So these are trials which an Autarch left behind for posterity, eh?” Ning was quite relaxed. It was much like the trials which he himself had set down for those who wished to acquire his legacy. Not just everyone was qualified to receive his techniques; they had to pass very stringent tests. The Autarch must’ve put quite a bit of effort into constructing this giant Azureflower Estate; it only made sense for him to put down a few trials as well.

Those who were too weak would die. Being able to survive and flee was also a form of strength... but only those who were able to truly pass the trials would earn the rewards which the master of the Azureflower Estate had left behind.

Whoosh. Ning stepped forward, moving up the stairs and towards the plaza with the muscular Whitethaw behind him. Ning instructed, “Whitethat, you are not to intervene unless directly ordered to.”

“Understood,” Whitethaw said respectfully.

“So it is a Daolord...” The hundred-plus Emperors in the plaza were clearly a bit disappointed when they saw the white-robed youth stride

towards them.

“A mere Daolord. Only ten of us are allowed to fight, and the weakest ten at that.” An evil-looking Emperor who had azure eyebrows and emanated the strongest aura out of the group shook his head. “When will an Emperor come? That way, all of us would be allowed to have some fun.”

“Booooring.”

“We’ve been here forever, unable to leave this plaza.”

“How long will it be before we are granted our release?” The Emperors chatted casually amongst themselves. They had once been filled with rage and venom, as they had been restricted to this plaza for tens of millions of chaos cycles by now... and it was possible that they would be for all of eternity. This sort of loneliness would drive even Eternal Emperors insane. However... time dulls away all things. By now, they were quite relaxed and simply waited silently.

Besides... the master of the Azureflower Estate did arrange for certain conditions by which they could be released.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh! The other Emperors continued to chat while ten of their peers flew over at high speed, preventing Ning from advancing.

“Hey kid, don’t blame us if we end up killing you. Everything is as the master of the estate has ordained.” One of the Emperors was a skinny old man with cold eyes, and a deep green mist began to emanate from him as he spoke.

“It has been a long, long time since I’ve seen a Daolord. Let’s not be hasty, gentlemen. Let’s take the fight against this kid slowly. If we move too fast, it’ll be boring. We’ll want to enjoy killing him, slicing him apart one cut at a time. Oh my... I can hardly wait,” a youth with a ruddy face and long, blood-red hair said, his tongue forked like a snake’s.

“Let’s do it.”

“Don’t let him escape. Surround him.” The ten Emperors were all quite

evil-looking, and they emanated murderous auras.

The white-robed Ning nodded slowly when he saw this. “Ah. I now understand why the master of the Azureflower Estate captured you and sentenced you here as punishment. If I was the master, I would’ve killed you long ago.”

“Hmph.”

“You? Kill us?”

“Such arrogance.” The ten Emperors were instantly enraged at being criticized by a Daolord in this fashion. They couldn’t help but feel both embarrassed and angered by his words.

“Spirit of the estate.” Ning glanced at the white-robed elder standing in front of the distant palace entrance, then called out: “Can I capture them?” If he was permitted to capture them, it would be up to him if he wanted to kill them or not.

The distant white-robed elder’s voice remained as cold as ever: “If you kill them, I’ll kill you!”

Ning blinked. Moments later, he understood. After the lord of the Azureflower Estate captured these Emperors, he had apparently ‘modified’ them in some way. They weren’t true cultivators any longer; they were more like golems! They had been placed here to test future trial-takers, and Ning was just one of them. If he captured the Emperors, how would those who came after him be tested?

“Haha... if that’s the case, I’ll just wrap it up quickly.” Ning stretched out his hands, causing two of the Darknorth swords to fly out of the sheath on his back and into them.

“Arrogant brat.” The ten Emperors instantly transformed into mist, light, flames, and other things as they started to surround Ning, wanting to ensure that he wouldn’t be able to escape.

Ning casually sauntered forwards, with Whitethaw behind him.

Boom. Boom. Boom. All sorts of various attacks filled the skies as they

flew towards Ning. Ning could immediately tell that these ten Emperors were roughly at the supreme Daolord level! Ning couldn't help but shake his head: "They really are the ten weakest Emperors."

Ning's twin swords began to move. Whap! Whap! Whap! Whap! Whap! Whap! The Northbow swords transformed into ferocious streams of water, striking back against the attacks like waves slapping against the shore. The streams of water struck straight upon the bodies of the Emperors, sending them flying backwards like swatted mosquitoes. Even though they had transformed into their invulnerable forms, Ning was able to beat them back into their original forms.

The difference in power was simply too great. Ning was able to crush even Archon Silksnow, who was in turn able to slaughter supreme Daolords with ease. One could imagine how puny these ten Emperors were compared to Ning.

"This Daolord... h-he..."

"Has he succeeded in his Daomerge? But he clearly doesn't have that whiff of eternity about him."

The many other Emperors who had been watching from afar were all stunned as well. A Daolord was able to crush ten Emperors like this? How?!

In truth, prior to the trip to Crimsonwave Temple, Ning would at most be able to fight them to a standstill. Now, however, Ning had made breakthroughs in his [Heartsword] art... but even more importantly, he had reached the fourth stage with his Omega Sword Dao. He truly was one of the most supreme powers of this realmverse, and was naturally able to dominate these common Emperors with ease.

The Emperors all stared, stupefied, at Ning as he casually strolled across the plaza and arrived at the entrance to the palace. As for Whitethaw, he continued to walk straight behind Ning with incomparable calmness.

Boom. The white-haired and elderly estate-spirit watched in shock as Ning stretched his hand out and pushed at the palace gates. With a deep booming sound, the giant palace gates swung open.

“You...?” The white-haired elder stared at Ning, rather puzzled.

“Estate-spirit.” Ning looked at the white-haired elder respectfully.

“A tri-force fusion technique?” the white-haired elder murmured softly.

Ning was startled for a moment before realizing that he was referring to the [Heartsword] art. “Precisely.” Ning nodded.

The [Heartsword] art was a technique which perfectly merged heartforce, divine power, and Immortal energy together. In truth, even if Ning hadn’t made a breakthrough with his Omega Sword Dao, his mastery of the twelfth stance of the [Heartsword] art would’ve still put him on par with Archon Silksnow. That by itself was enough to effortlessly sweep these Emperors aside. Now that he HAD broken through? He was probably invincible against anyone save for the Hegemons, and of course Daoist Bluestone.

“A tri-force fusion technique...” The white-robed elder’s gaze grew distant. “Heartforce is indeed incredible. Even though the technique which Master created is capable of transforming and merging all types of energy, heartforce is still special and unique. The legends say that if a heartworld can truly reach the apex of power, the treasures formed within it will become real and can be actually used. The heartworld shall become a real world that you can manipulate at will. If someone could reach that level, that person would become truly invincible.”

“The heartworld... a real world?” Ning deeply desired to reach that level, but he knew just how ridiculous and inconceivable it was. It meant that if he imagined a hundred realmships into existence within his heartworld, then a hundred real realmships would be formed. If he willed an army of Black Emperors into existence, all of them would be real as well.

The level of power that would represent...

Yes, from a theoretical standpoint once a heartworld reached the true apex of power, it was possible to manifest real objects within it... but no one had ever been able to accomplish such a thing. The cultivator civilizations had its Autarchs, but there had never been a Heartforce Autarch!

“For you to have mastered a tri-force fusion technique is a sign that you are quite talented.” The white-haired elder nodded slowly. “Since you have passed the second trial, take your second reward.” The old man tossed out a rolled-up jade scroll.

Ning immediately accepted it, then asked, “What is this?”

“You were asking about Omega Daos, yes?” The white-haired elder explained, “This jade scroll was left behind by a truly dazzling Daolord which my master once encountered. He was so unspeakably, monstrously talented that he was able to enhance his Dao of Fire to the absolute apex, and then train to become a Daolord of the Fourth Step with his Omega Fire Dao! Alas, the Daomerge for an Omega Dao is far, far too difficult, far more difficult than for those supreme Daolords who seek to become Hegemons.”

“In the end, that Daolord failed his Daomerge as well. After he failed his Daomerge but before he died, he ran into my master... and he passed down the secrets of his self-created Omega Fire Dao to my master,” the white-haired elder said.

# Chapter 25: Knockout

Ji Ning felt a surge of excitement as he listened. His path was that of an Omega Dao as well, and he had also become a Daolord of the Fourth Step. The next step to take was that of the Daomerge. As Ning knew, for the Daomerge he would need to take every single insight he had ever gained into the first, second, third, and fourth stages of his Omega Sword Dao, and then completely transform them into a truly perfect Eternal Omega Sword Dao.

If he succeeded in the Daomerge, his Omega Sword Dao would become truly perfect to the point where it wouldn't be affected in the slightest by the passage of time. Only a Dao such as this was qualified to be called 'eternal'.

Thus, every single successful Daomerge would result in the new Emperor skyrocketing in power by two full levels! Second-tier Daolords would be catapulted to the Archon level of power, while supreme Daolords would rise straight to the Hegemon level of power!

There would be a similarly incredible rise in power for a successful Daomerge with the Omega Sword Dao... and the increase would be due to the power of a Dao that was truly eternal! Thus, what Ning needed to do was to create an Eternal Omega Sword Dao... and that was going to be indescribably difficult.

"That fellow Daoist died. Will I be able to succeed?" Ning asked himself. He wasn't sure of what the answer would be.

"Omega Daos are extraordinary and unfathomable. They are truly above all other Daos and are the ultimate Daos." The white-bearded elder looked at Ning. "You might not train in the Dao of Fire, but you can still study this Omega Dao. It might help inspire you and be of use to you, increasing your own chances at the Daomerge dramatically."

Ning clenched the jade scroll, sending his godsense into it. There were certain barriers within it, forcing him to swear a lifeblood oath not to transmit it to others in order to study it.

Ning immediately swore the oath. Instantly, a large amount of information flooded into his mind as the jade scroll in Ning's hands transformed into bits of dust.

It was unspeakably profound. This was the Dao of Fire, but visualized to the utmost apex. It included every single type of fire possible, including blazing flames, icy flames, negative-energy flames, explosive flames... all types of flames could be controlled by it.

The Daolord who created this 'Omega Fire Dao' was capable of releasing flames that were truly terrifying.

"He truly was the embodiment of fire, the master of all flames," Ning sighed in amazement. It made sense. When he created his Omega Sword Dao, there was an instant resonance with the prime essence of the sword. In that instant, he immediately understood that he was now the master of the Dao of the Sword. As for the deceased creator of the Omega Fire Dao, he was most likely the master of the Dao of Fire.

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When the white-haired elder saw Ning open his eyes, the elder said in a icy voice, "You have already passed the first two trials. Only one more remains before you, and if you can survive it you won't face any more danger. In addition... you will earn something which is far more valuable than even the Omega Dao you were just shown!"

"Far more valuable?" Ning's eyes lit up. Something that was far more valuable than an Omega Dao... what could it be? What had the master of the Azureflower Estate prepared?

"This reward will naturally be the most valuable thing within the entire estate. My master would've have wasted all this time and effort for just the Omega Dao of a single Daolord of the Fourth Step," the white-haired elder said coldly. "However... not just anyone is worthy of the true treasure. You must pass the third trial first. If you die in the attempt, you can only blame yourself and your own uselessness. Alright. Time to go in."

"Alright." Ning nodded, then stepped into the palace.

From the outside, the palace had been blocked by an invisible screen of energy that prevented him from seeing anything inside it. As soon as he stepped inside, everything became clearly visible. He saw that the great palace had a total of sixteen giant golden pillars within it, with a royal throne located at the highest part of the palace.

Ning turned his gaze to glance at the two figures seated in the lotus position at the edges of the palace. One figure was a figure dressed in long violet robes and who emanated an aura of incredible power that was comparable to that of Hegemon Brightshore or Hegemon Windrain! The other had a significantly weaker aura and was dressed in black robes. He was thin and had long, slender eyes that were brimming with cold malice.

“Hm?” The two figures simultaneously opened their eyes.

“A Daolord?” The violet-robed man glanced sideways. “How boring. It is time for you to go to work, disciple.”

“Don’t worry, Master.” The skinny black-robed man narrowed his eyes as he looked at Ning, cold malice flashing within them. “I’ll definitely take ‘good care’ of this young Daolord.”

Ning frowned slightly. He could sense that the black-robed man was brimming with murderous intentions.

The white-haired old man had walked in alongside Ning. The old man now said in a cold voice, “You are a Daolord, and so your opponent shall be someone who has reached a level of power comparable to the Archon-level Eternal Emperors of your Flamedragon Realmverse! All you need to do is defeat him by knocking him out of the palace, and you’ll have succeeded.”

“Knock an Archon out of the palace?” Ning was rather surprised. This trial wasn’t too hard for him, but it was almost impossibly hard for a Daolord.

“Do you feel this is difficult?” The white-haired elder said coldly, “If you were an Emperor, you would have to defeat the Hegemon and knock the Hegemon out of the palace in order to win. These two, master and disciple, are limited in their movements because they aren’t able to leave the

palace. If you can force them out, then the formations will activate and slay them.”

“So you are telling me that if I succeed in passing through the third stage, the guardian will definitely die.” Ning was secretly stunned at how ruthless the master of the Azureflower Estate was. If Ning was an Emperor, he would’ve had to defeat the Hegemon by knocking the Hegemon out of the palace? Not even a true Hegemon would necessarily be able to succeed! Only one of the more elite Hegemons would be able to accomplish it. The Flamedragon Realmverse only had three Hegemons to begin with!

As for a Daolord capable of knocking out an Archon of the Sacred Cities? That meant the Archon had to either train in an Omega Dao or have reached an extremely high level in a technique similar to the [Heartsword] art. Only then would they be capable of such ludicrous levels of power. How many monstrous Daolords of that level had the Flamedragon Realmverse ever even given birth to?

“This trial is ridiculous,” Ning muttered silently to himself.

“If you aren’t a truly peerless and dazzling figure, you are not worthy of challenging the third trial. Not even average Hegemons are worthy,” the white-haired elder said coldly. “Alright. Time to begin.”

“Heh heh heh...” The black-robed man slowly sauntered forwards, not disguising his murderous intent in the slightest as he let out an odd laugh. “Daolord boy, if you must blame someone, blame the master of this estate for his callousness. I once enjoyed a wonderful, carefree life roaming through the outside world, killing whoever I pleased. No one dared to stand in my way! Now, I’ve been forced to stay within this estate forever... but don’t worry. I won’t kill you too quickly. I’ll let you die a slow, agonizing death. I’ll take my time enjoying a delicate little morsel like yourself.” The black-robed man’s eyes were filled with excitement.

Ning stretched out both hands, causing two Northbow swords to fly out of the sheath and into his grasp. He was an incredibly talented Daolord who had reached the fourth stage of his Omega Sword Dao, and he also

had his [Heartsword] art. Even if he had to fight the Hegemon, Ning was certain he would be able to leave this place safely.

“Kill.” The black-robed man made his move. Whoosh! A long black serpentine shadow appeared in the skies, moving with ghostly speed as it instantly charged towards Ning.

Boom! Ning casually tossed out one of his swords. Sword-light flew outwards like a surging tsunami, slamming into the black serpentine shadow with overwhelming and crushing power. The shadow was instantly destroyed, revealing the figure of the black-robed man within it. The man was wielding a long saber in a two-handed grip, and the blow smashed him into the ground with a loud boom.

The earth trembled violently. Only after a moment passed was the black-robed man able to rise to his feet.

“Another golem-body?” Ning shook his head. His opponent was no longer a true cultivator.

“Y-you...” The black-robed man stared at Ning in shock.

Boom! Boom! Ning continued to swing his Darknorth swords, sending one blow after another towards his opponent. His opponent wasn’t able to dodge the attacks at all and was sent flying repeatedly by Ning! After a mere five strikes, Ning was able to send his foe flying out of the palace gates.

“No...!” The black-robed man let out a terrified scream. The power of Ning’s strike was simply too great, and he was sent flying backwards while completely unable to control his body.

In the instant that he flew out of the palace gates, a blurry golden light suddenly appeared at the gates and brushed past his body. The black-robed man’s aura instantly vanished, his body separating into multiple different components that were whisked away by the golden light, which they vanished as well.

“He died.” The violet-robed Hegemon within the hall watched as his disciple died, a hint of sorrow in his eyes.

He had once been an exalted Hegemon, a man of great glory and honor. He had an entire host of Emperors serving him, and no one had ever dared to oppose him!

But then the master of the estate had shown up. The Hegemon had been captured with nothing more than the wave of a hand. It was as easy as capturing a little baby chicken! He and his disciple had then been transformed into golem-like creatures who would forever stay here and obey the orders they had been given. Now, his disciple had died... and even the final remnants of his soul and true soul had vanished.

“When will it become my turn?” the violet-robed Hegemon mused. A fierce light flashed through his eyes. “I won’t make it easy. I’m a Hegemon, and I’ve been training here for many years. I’m much more powerful now than when I was first captured. And... the master of the estate promised that I would have a chance to regain my freedom in the future.” The violet-robed man looked at the distant white-robed Ning. “Given how powerful this Daolord is... perhaps he is the hope which was promised to all of us captured Emperors?”

Ning had easily passed through all three trials. This stunned the white-robed elder.

“I passed the third trial, right?” Ning glanced at the white-robed elder.

“You passed.” The white-robed elder nodded. “Follow me, then.”

# Chapter 26: As Vast as the Sea

The white-haired elder led the way as Ji Ning and Whitethaw followed from behind.

“Put away your golem. There will no longer be any danger here,” the white-haired elder instructed.

“Yes, senior.” Ning waved his hand, putting away the Protector golem. This trip to the Azureflower Estate had been much smoother than he had anticipated... but when he thought about it, it made sense. The master of the estate had left behind two levels of challenges; one was meant for Daolords, the other was meant for Emperors. The Daolord-level trials had already been quite ridiculous; if Ning hadn’t mastered the [Heartsword] art, even the fourth stage of the Omega Sword Dao wouldn’t have been enough for him to win with ease.

The white-haired elder led the way until they reached a great palace. Boom! The palace walls parted before them, revealing a doorway. They entered through this side passageway and quickly reached a private, quiet hall.

“What is this place?” Ning looked about, rather stunned. This giant hall was filled with enormous bookshelves which leaned against the walls. Every single bookshelf was at least thirty kilometers long, and there were hundreds of layers for each one. Every single layer was filled with jade slips, and they truly were numerous beyond measure. Ning could see no end of them!

Ning was rather dazed. Just a cursory scan indicated that there had to be over a hundred billion scrolls here... and that was just a rough estimate! This was a staggering, unheard-of figure.

“These are all of the more powerful techniques which my master acquired after scouring virtually the entire Chaosverse.” The white-haired elder had a rather complex look in his eyes as he continued slowly, “It doesn’t just have cultivator techniques, it also has Sithe techniques. Master collected and modified them all, making them suitable for us

cultivators to use.”

“In other words... this place holds all of the countless elite techniques which were created by the cultivator civilizations and the Sithe civilization.” The white-haired elder looked at Ning. “What you need to do... is to read through all of them.”

“All cultivator civilizations? The entire Sithe civilization?” No matter how steady Ning normally was, he couldn’t help but begin to tremble inside. This was simply inconceivable.

In his original planet of ‘Earth’ in the Three Realms, there was a saying: ‘After you read over ten thousand books, you can write like a god.’ The creation of every single technique represented the accumulated wisdom and insight of one particular cultivator! The reason why Ning was able to become a Daolord of the Fourth Step was in large part due to Ning having the chance to inspect the three hundred-plus Hegemonic legacies which Autarch Bolin had left behind within that special region. They had been incredibly important, as they had broadened Ning’s horizons and let him gain many new insights and epiphanies.

And now?

The fruits of all cultivator civilizations were before him. Even the techniques belonging to the Sithe had been modified and retrofitted so that cultivators could make use of them. Countless techniques were gathered here. Their value was truly incalculable! They would be of far more help to him in understanding the Dao than any other treasure. This library was far more valuable than the Voidsea Jadeseal had been; even a Hegemon would go crazy for a chance like this!

“He scoured virtually the entire Chaosverse for these techniques, and even overhauled the techniques of the Sithe civilization...” Ning murmured softly. “Senior, can you please tell me who the master of this estate was?”

“My master didn’t plan to accept any disciples,” the white-haired elder said. “This is nothing more than the inheritance he has entrusted to later generations. Since you have passed his trials, you are deserving of what is

here.”

“Inheritance?” Ning narrowed his eyes.

“Your guess is correct. Master is dead.” The white-haired elder glanced at the countless jade scrolls. His face was still cold and calm, but his gaze was rather distant and his voice very soft.

“Dead?” Ning could hardly believe this. “H-he... did he die in battle against the Sithe?”

“Hmph. You overestimate their abilities.” The white-haired elder laughed coldly. “The cultivator civilizations ended up winning our great war against the Sithe! But even if we lost the battle, as an Autarch my master would never have died to them.”

“Then how is it that he died?” Ning truly couldn’t believe it. An Autarch, someone who stood at the very apex of all cultivator civilizations, had somehow died?

“It was a form of suicide.” The white-haired elder shook his head. “Enough questions.”

Ning was rather dazed. A form of suicide? Autarchs had to have incredible Dao-hearts; how could one possibly choose to commit suicide? But then, Ning quickly understood. A ‘form of suicide’... that meant it wasn’t true suicide! Otherwise, why would the estate-spirit add the qualifier ‘a form of’? However, since the estate-spirit didn’t wish to speak further, Ning no longer pursued this line of questioning.

“Senior, you tell this junior who the master of this estate was? Given the grace he has shown to me, I simply must know his name,” Ning said.

“My master’s Daoist title was simply ‘Awakener’. He was referred to as Autarch Awakener.” The white-robed elder’s eyes shone with light.

Ning immediately turned and knelt down towards the countless jade slips in front of him as though he was facing his master. “This junior is named Darknorth. Senior, although you are not my master in title, you are my master in practice! This junior shall forever remember the benevolence you have shown me.” Ning then kowtowed nine times

solemnly, wishing to express the gratitude and excitement he felt. Ning then rose to his feet.

“You are quite conscientious.” The white-robed elder nodded slowly when he saw this. “The benevolence Master has shown you vastly surpasses that which most teachers show their students. Not even most of Master’s actual students were permitted to see this techniques; only two were granted access.”

“Mm.” Ning nodded and then asked curiously, “Are you saying that Sithe techniques are not appropriate for us cultivators to train in? They have to be retrofitted first?”

“There are certain fundamental differences between us and the Sithe,” the white-haired elder said. “We are simply completely different on the most basic of levels. They were a different type of lifeform, a very unique type of lifeform, and they had a civilization and culture which belonged to them and them alone! We are not able to use the majority of their techniques, with just a few minor tricks available to us.”

Ning nodded.

“Enough. Go ahead and read through these first,” the white-haired elder instructed. “Also – before doing that, go ahead and swear an oath that you will not transmit anything you see here.”

Ning nodded. The lord of the Azureflower Estate, Autarch Awakener, hadn’t even permitted most of his personal disciples to view this place. Ning was lucky to even have a chance to read in this place; how could he possibly be permitted to transmit these techniques as he pleased? It had taken even Autarch Awakener an incredible amount of blood, sweat, and effort to accumulate all these techniques.

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And so, Ning began a new life devoted to reading. He buried himself in the countless jade slips while surrounded by a field of accelerated time that was a hundred times faster than normal time. He memorized one jade slip after another.

This truly was a sea of techniques, and they came from different races, different realmverses, and different otherverses. They represented the accumulated wisdom of countless mighty cultivators, and Ning's horizons were truly broadened. In fact, he was beginning to rapidly gain tremendous amounts of insight into the other Daos he was fairly skilled in, such as the Dao of Water and the Dao of Lightning! He was even gaining more insights into the [Omega Sword Dao] and the [Heartsword] art, both of which had already reached incredible heights.

The reading alone was enough to help him upgrade his insights. This was because he was reading and absorbing the accumulated wisdom of countless cultivators.

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Ning began to feel himself change and transform as he subsumed himself within this sea of techniques. A new foundation was being established. Reading and memorizing all of these countless techniques was a way for him to dramatically expand his foundation of understanding! Right now, he had merely done some cursory reading; later on, he would train in each technique in detail. He would improve even more then! These countless techniques represented an inconceivable treasure in terms of cultivating the Dao. This was why Ning hadn't hesitated at all in kneeling down and kowtowing as though he was in front of his master. He truly felt grateful.

For the first time... Ning began to feel that he had a chance at succeeding in the Daomerge.

By now, Ning was incredibly powerful and was able to read incredibly fast. It took him merely 130 million years to completely read through everything once. But of course, if one factored in the usage of temporal acceleration then Ning had actually spent over 13 billion years reading.

"I'm done reading." Ning put down the final jade slip. His very aura itself had begun to change a bit. He had become more reserved and more ordinary-looking.

Over the course of reading for the past millions of years, Ning felt as

though he had gained a picture of all cultivator civilizations as well as the entire Sithe civilization. He had bathed in the accumulated wisdom of two entire civilizations, and he no longer felt the slightest bit of pride in himself. So what if he had developed an Omega Dao? What was so pride-worthy about that? He was nothing more than someone who, prior to becoming a Samsara Daolord, had a few special ideas and encountered enough fortunate experiences that he was able to embark upon the path of the Omega Dao.

The Hegemons weren't necessarily less talented than him, just not as lucky... and the likes of Emperor Heartsword, who had developed the [Hartsword] art, was also a freakishly talented figure.

The cultivator civilizations, as a whole, had far too many incredibly talented figures.

"Done reading?" The white-robed elder's voice rang out.

Ning raised his head to look at the elder, then nodded. "I'm done reading. I feel as though the pride I felt previously was absolutely laughable."

"In the great sea of the various cultivator civilizations, only Autarchs are truly supreme and transcendent. All others are quite common and ordinary." The white-robed elder waved a finger, causing countless streams of light to appear midair within the palace. The light surged forward and opened a door which led to a hidden dimension... and from that hidden dimension flew out a series of jade slips as well as a single dazzling and eye-catching godsense crystal.

This godsense crystal was far more dazzling than any gemstone. It caused even Ning's heart to shudder.

"Here are eleven scrolls of Omega Daos as well as my master's own Dao," the white-haired elder said.

# Chapter 27: The Second Palace

Ji Ning was stunned. A godsense legacy... and ten scrolls filled with Omega Daos? The master of the Azureflower Estate, Autarch Awakener, didn't have a master-disciple relationship with Ning, but in truth he had done far more for Ning than any ordinary master would.

"These eleven scrolls of Omega Daos represent eleven absolutely dazzlingly Daolords," the white-haired elder said. "All of them trained to become Daolords of the Fourth Step... but unfortunately, they all failed in the Daomerge. Despite that they left behind their Daos to posterity. Factor in the first one you received earlier, and you have won for yourself a total of twelve Omega Dao scrolls. These are all of the Omega Dao techniques which my master has collected."

"They all failed in their Daomerge?" Ning felt a tremendous sense of pressure.

"If my guess is correct... your path should be that of the Omega Dao as well." The white-haired elder looked at Ning, who nodded. Given how easily Ning had knocked the Archon-level guardian out of the palace, the white-haired elder had quickly come to this conclusion.

"The Daomerge for any Omega Dao is extremely, extremely difficult," the white-haired elder said. "Anyone who succeeds in the Daomerge for an Omega Dao would gain inconceivable power, after all. It only makes sense that its Daomerge is incredibly difficult."

Ning nodded in understanding. Samsara Daolords all chose different Daos. It was much like constructing a building. Ordinary Daolords who walked ordinary Daos merely had to build a thatched cottage! Even if they succeeded in the Daomerge, they would always remain within that cottage. They would be correspondingly weak.

The Omega Dao, however, required the construction of a giant palace that was tens of thousands of meters tall! That meant it needed a far more stable foundation... and even if the cultivator failed the Daomerge, he would still be able to easily dominate those weaker Emperors.

To become a Daolord of the Fourth Step meant that all of the basic preparations had been completed. One could attempt the Daomerge at any time. If you failed the Daomerge, your palace would begin to crumble. If you succeeded, it would be completed and eternal.

But of course, this was just a metaphor. To master an Eternal Omega Sword Dao was far more complex than creating any so-called palace.

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Ning fully mastered all eleven scrolls of the Omega Dao, then accepted the crystal of godsense.

Whoosh. The godsense surged into his body, causing an awesome scene to appear within his mind.

A graceful youth dressed in a white robe with blue trims appeared in Ning's mind. The youth looked ordinary at first, but the more one stared at him the more one would feel that he was deadly attractive. After becoming an Autarch, every single inch of his body had become naturally filled with the unspeakable aroma of the Dao! This sort of Dao-aroma would naturally generate feelings of irresistible attraction to weaker cultivators.

The graceful youth was standing within an ordinary-looking study, teaching a group of children. Ning had become one of the children as well, and he listened obediently as the young Awakener taught him.

Soon, the image changed to become that of an army camp. A military officer was drilling his soldiers with the spear. The military officer was the graceful youth, while Ning had become one of the soldiers.

Then, the scene transformed to become a barbarian tribe. The witch-doctor who led this tribe was teaching the young tribesmen, with Ning one of the tribesmen and the graceful youth the witch-doctor.

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One scene after another played out. They all seemed ordinary, but they carried an ineffable, indescribable aura to them. Time flowed on for what felt like a trillion years. Ning started as a mortal, became a cultivator, and now was a Hegemon.

The graceful youth stood there in the void, a group of cultivators standing behind him. All of their auras were at the Hegemonic level, with Ning amongst them.

Whoosh. The graceful youth waved his sleeves, sending an ordinary-looking gust of wind towards Ning and the other cultivators. However the power of this gentle wind suddenly skyrocketed to become a billion times more powerful. The wind instantly reached an absolutely inconceivable level of power, instantly annihilating Ning and the other cultivators. However, Ning and the others then reappeared once more.

“This is my Dao. All of you have seen what there is to see. You may leave, now. Shoo.” The graceful youth smiled as he waved gently at the group.

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Ning suddenly came back to his senses.

“You woke up?” The white-haired elder looked at Ning.

“I’m up,” Ning said. “I feel as though a trillion years have gone by... but I can sense from the local spacetime that only a day has actually gone past.”

Ning felt indescribable emotions in his heart. In the process of accepting the legacy, he had been ‘trained’ from a child to the point of becoming a Hegemon. Autarch Awakener had indeed displayed his Dao... but he had done so through countless demonstrations over the course of what felt like trillions of years. Ning felt a strong sense of attachment to him, as though the Autarch truly was his master and elder. When he thought of how Autarch Awakener had already perished, Ning felt a sense of sorrow in his heart.

“You’ve already viewed everything there is to view in the first palace. You can now enter the second palace, which is the final palace,” the white-haired elder said.

“The second palace?” Ning was startled. The first palace already contained the countless techniques which belonged to the cultivator civilizations, and even included countless retrofitted Sithe techniques. It

even held Omega Daos and Autarch Awakener's own Dao! What could the second palace possibly hold?

"Follow me." The white-haired elder walked forwards.

"Yes." Ning followed from behind. They walked to the end of this palace hall, where a passageway appeared in the walls. They entered the passageway, arriving at a second hall.

Ning could see that the second hall was clearly much smaller, roughly three hundred meters in size! It was laid out in accordance with the principles of the Eight Trigrams, and the four walls were filled with bookshelves and jade scrolls. However, the jade scrolls here numbered in the tens of thousands at most. There truly were far fewer here than in the previous hall.

"Are there even better techniques here?" Ning was puzzled.

"You've already seen all of the techniques of two different types of civilizations. What 'better techniques' are you expecting?" The white-haired elder gave Ning a glance.

"Then these jade scrolls...?" Ning stared at the surrounding area.

"You'll know soon enough." The white-haired elder pointed at the very center of the second hall, at the center of the Eight Trigrams. As he pointed, the ground in the center began to bulge upwards, transforming into a stone dais that was shaped like the Eight Trigrams and clearly meant for use as a meditation mat. The stone dais was black with a few specks of white light glowing on its surface. "Sit there."

Ning didn't hesitate. Given how mighty Autarch Awakener was and how powerful the wards within the Azureflower Estate were, it would be easy for the estate-spirit to kill him. Hell, even Hegemons would be slain with ease. Ning didn't worry about any tricks or traps at all.

Ning walked over, then sat down in the lotus position atop the stone dais.

Whoosh. A bone-chilling cold instantly pervaded his entire body. Ning shivered. He could sense that the speed at which his truesoul 'thought'

had just skyrocketed. He was now able to think unfathomably faster than before.

“My master spent untold amounts of effort to construct this Azureflower Estate... and its heart is this stone dais,” the white-haired elder said as he pointed at the stone dais. “The countless formations in this estate have pooled their power within it, ensuring that it has an absolutely incredible supportive effect! Sitting on it is akin to being in a prajna-state of constant epiphany.”

Ning nodded. When he sat atop this stone dais, the effect was indeed much stronger than that of the Stone Censer of Reunion. Ning couldn't help but lower his head to look at the stone dais. This was simply too incredible and marvelous. With this stone dais, he would be able to cultivate the Dao much more quickly than before. Most likely, even his chances at the Daomerge would be improved by a bit.

“My master originally constructed this stone dais for himself. He spent his time cultivating atop it, and he paid an absolutely astronomical price to create it. Now, he has left it to those who are linked to this place by karma and destiny.” The white-haired elder watched as Ning excitedly lowered his head and gently stroked the stone dais, then continued; “Now that you have passed the trials, you can come use this stone dais for as long as you are alive. I suspect that it is highly unlikely a second destined person will make it here in the next 108,000 chaos cycles.”

Ning nodded excitedly. This was definitely a truly supreme and peerless treasure.

“Calm down first. Once you've completely calmed down, I'll talk to you about something else,” the white-haired elder said.

“Alright.” Ning could sense that his heart was still trembling. He had first viewed the countless techniques belonging to two different types of civilizations, then discovered this stone dais which vastly surpassed the Stone Censer of Reunion. Ning naturally was in a state of shock!

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A long while later, Ning finally began to calm down. He looked at the

white-haired elder, his heart tranquil.

“Now that you are calmer, I’ll explain.” The white-robed elder said, “The reason why my master left behind so many arrangements and even permitted you to view all of these techniques... is because of a final, dying wish he had.”

“A final wish?” Ning was stunned.

“Yes.” The white-robed elder nodded. “You should have already trained in the ‘Ninespace’ technique, yes?”

“The ‘Ninespace’ technique?” Ning was startled.

“Those Nine Chaos Seals,” the white-haired elder explained. “My master created the Nine Chaos Seals. They allow you to establish a brand new space within your sea of consciousness where an azure flower will bloom. This is the ‘ninespace’ region. It can convert Immortal energy, divine power, heartforce, and all other types of energy into a single mist-like form of energy. Of all the techniques which my master created in the countless years after he reached Autarchy, this is his proudest... but also his greatest regret. Even when he died, he still felt regret over this technique.”

# Chapter 28: Creating Ten Techniques

“His greatest regret?” Ji Ning was rather puzzled. The Nine Chaos Seals were indeed quite marvelous. They were capable of transforming his heartforce, his divine power, his Immortal energy, and even the chaos energy of the outside world. It made the energy inside his body far more pure, and was extremely nourishing to the soul and truesoul. Wasn’t it perfect?

“Yes... his greatest regret. Master had always felt regret over this technique and was unhappy with it,” the white-haired elder said with a nod. “The ‘Ninespace’ technique has many inherent flaws. For example, one can only master it before reaching the World level! Otherwise, there will be no way to establish the ninespace region within the sea of consciousness. For another example, there’s no way the mist-energy can leave the body.”

Ning nodded. This was true, and the reason why in the past he had always relied on close combat. However, the more powerful one became, the more important one’s mastery over the Dao would be. By now, the additional strength granted to him by the azureflower mist energy was negligible.

“But these are all small flaws. If Master spent a bit more effort, he would be able to perfect them,” the white-haired elder said. “The fatal flaw to this technique... is that the ninespace region is at most able to convert the power of Samsara Daolords! The divine power, heartforce, and Immortal energy of Eternal Emperors cannot be converted at all.”

Ning was stunned. “Eternal-level energies cannot be converted?”

“Right. Thus, this technique is only useful to cultivators below the Eternal Emperor level.” The white-haired elder shook his head and sighed. “My master’s original plan was to create a total of twelve of those chaos seals! Not only would this technique be able to convert the energies of Eternal Emperors... it would even be able to convert the energies of Autarchs! Only then would this technique be considered perfect. If it could

convert an Autarch's energy, it would be of huge benefit to even the Autarchs!"

Ning could only nod. He didn't really understand what Autarchs were truly capable of, but being able to convert their energies had to be quite helpful.

"The reason why my master created this technique was because the Sithe race relied upon a source of energy that was very pure and similar to this mist energy," the white-haired elder said. "Every member of the Sithe race, from the weakest to the strongest, all used something akin to your mist-energy."

"Ah?!" Ning was stunned. "They don't use divine power or Immortal energy?"

"They do not." The white-haired elder shook his head. "Their energy source can be used the same way as divine power or Immortal energy is used, but is even more powerful. Why would they need divine power or Immortal energy?"

Ning was truly stunned now. It seemed as though the Sithe truly were fundamentally different from cultivators; even their techniques were completely different! Perhaps there were just a few simple techniques like the [Daoheart] or the [Vitalis] arts which both sides could use. This was the reason why Emperor Waveshift had moved Crimsonwave Temple to his home without destroying the [Daoheart] or [Vitalis] techniques.

"To create an entirely new system of cultivation is unspeakably difficult. Master labored by himself for untold aeons to find a way to merge divine power, Immortal energy, heartforce, and all other types of energy into this mist energy," the white-haired elder said. "This was Master's greatest goal, and he poured all of his effort into it."

"He scoured the cultivator civilizations for techniques, and even retrofitted countless Sithe techniques for us to use... but his true goal was still to create the Nine Chaos Seals." The white-haired elder looked at Ning. "Master is dead now, and his dying regret was this technique. Thus, he hopes that his successors will be able to create a tenth chaos seal... and

perhaps help him realize his hypothesized eleventh and twelfth chaos seals.”

Ning nodded slowly. He couldn’t help but ask, “If even the Autarch failed, how could we successors possibly succeed?”

“Do not underestimate any cultivator. Master was able to become an Autarch due to his talent, but also due to the countless strokes of good fortune he encountered. You juniors aren’t necessarily less talented than my master... and in fact, you yourself were able to develop an Omega Sword Dao at the Samsara Daolord level. When my master was a Samsara Daolord, he wasn’t even close to being a match for you,” the white-haired elder said. “There are some things which you can do which my master might not be able to.”

Ning was enlightened. Indeed, every single extremely talented cultivator had their own experiences and insights, and they would create techniques with those different thoughts in mind. Autarch Awakener had failed, but that didn’t mean that all cultivators would fail.

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“Master once lived here for many years, coming up with all sorts of techniques.” The white-haired elder pointed at the stacks of jade scrolls. “These are the various cultivation techniques which Master collected. They include many techniques meant for mortals. These are meant for ‘Foundation’, ‘Golden Core’, and ‘Nascent Soul’ cultivators... those over there are meant for the ‘Yin God’, ‘Thunder Tribulation’, and ‘Yang God’ cultivators... and those are meant for ‘Core Formation’, ‘Nine Cycles’, and ‘Truth’ level cultivators. All sorts of cultivation techniques are here, and they represent different paths of cultivation. However, everything eventually points towards the path of divine power and Immortal energy.”

“Master’s original plan was to create a completely new system of cultivation from scratch, but it was simply too difficult. Thus, in the end he developed the Nine Chaos Seals instead. These jade scrolls include many of Master’s thoughts about creating new techniques as well as other avenues he had considered.”

Ning stared at the tens of thousands of jade scrolls on the bookshelves around him. He couldn't help but imagine how Autarch Awakener had once sat on the stone dais, meditating on how to create better techniques.

He was an exalted Autarch... and his dying regret was this technique? Ning couldn't help but sigh emotion. However, it made sense. As an Autarch, Awakener had been completely and truly invincible. He was able to create even alternate universes with ease. Autarch Bolin had created the Aeonian race! As for Autarch Awakener, he had poured his efforts into creating a technique that could convert Autarch-level energies. Alas, the Autarchs had to be incredibly lonely; to be invincible truly did mean to be lonely.

"As a Daolord who was able to pass the trials, you are a truly dazzling figure amongst your peers." The white-haired elder looked at Ning. "I hope you can help my master accomplish his greatest dream."

"I won't ask much of you. If you can create a tenth chaos seal, that'll be enough," the white-haired elder said.

Ning nodded. Ning was in a state of constant epiphany thanks to being seated on the state dais, and countless insights were flashing through his mind. However, the more he thought about the Nine Chaos Seals, the more unfathomable and marvelous he found it to be. Ning couldn't help but feel a sense of true veneration. Anyone capable of creating such a technique was truly inconceivable... how was he supposed to make a further improvement to it?

Ning pondered there for many hours, then finally spoke: "It's too hard."

"Haha, of course it is hard! Master spent countless hours working on it to no avail. How could it be so easily accomplished?" The white-haired elder continued, "That is why master left a treasure behind to help you."

Ning listened attentively.

"However... prior to me giving it to you, you must create ten different techniques!" the white-haired elder said. "As you are a Daolord... the complexity and profundity of every single technique must reach the Archon level."

“Ten different techniques, each of which must be at the Archon level?!” Ning was flabbergasted.

“Right!” The white-haired elder nodded. “As a Daolord, if you can create ten different Archon-level techniques, it will be considered proof that you are quite talented when it comes to creating new techniques. In that case, I can give you the other treasure which Master left behind, and it will be of great use to you.”

“I need to create ten techniques for just one treasure?” Ning felt as though Autarch Awakener’s requirements were far too high. “But creating a tenth chaos seal to add onto the original Nine Chaos Seals will be of no use to me.” Ning shook his head.

The tenth chaos seal would allow Eternal Emperors to convert their energies... but the greatest problem facing Ning right now was the Daomerge!

“This treasure is an extremely valuable one. It is of great use to cultivators, especially those facing the Daomerge like yourself.” The white-haired elder added mysteriously, “Even the Autarch was extremely reluctant to part with it, which is why he insisted that you create ten techniques to prove your worth. Only then will he give you the treasure. Otherwise, it would be wasted on you. My master isn’t going to waste his resources like that.”

“It is of great use to those facing the Daomerge?” Ning’s eyes lit up.

“Right.” The white-haired elder laughed. He knew that this was what intrigued Daolords the most. Every single Daolord was unable to resist the allure of something which would aid them in the Daomerge.

“It is ranked number one in the entire Chaosverse with regards to help cultivators cultivate... and that naturally extends to the Daomerge as well,” the white-haired elder said.

“It is ranked number one? What about the Voidsea Jadeseal?” Ning asked.

“I’ve heard of those things. They can only be created by Emperors who

are extremely talented in the Dao of Numerancy, but they are of no use to cultivators like yourself, because you train in the Omega Sword Dao. Right?” The white-haired man continued, “No number of Voidsea Jade seals would be of as much use to you as this treasure. However, you have to first prove yourself in terms of your skill in creating techniques before I’ll give it to you.”

“Ten techniques, all Archon-level?” Ning nodded. “Fine, then. I’ll create ten techniques.”

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And so, Ning began to create new techniques all by his lonesome within the Azureflower Estate just outside the Three Realms.

He had already reached the fourth stage with his [Omega Sword Dao], and so it counted as his first Archon-level technique.

His [Heartforce Eradicator] technique was also extremely powerful and at the Archon level in might, but its underlying mysteries were based on the Omega Sword Dao and so it did not count. The [Dreamstar] art, however, was a type of illusory art which was merely at the supreme Daolord level. It was far too weak; it didn’t count.

Thus... at present Ning had only created a single Archon-level technique, the [Omega Sword Dao]. He needed to create nine more before he would be acknowledged as a gifted technique-creator by the spirit of the estate.

Luckily, Ning had been given the chance to see countless techniques which had been created by the cultivators as well as the Sithe, and was seated atop that stone dais. He was constantly in a prajna-state, and so he began to focus on his meditations. His first goal was to perfect his [Dreamstar] art, as it had already reached the supreme Daolord level. He only needed to upgrade it by one full level and it would be at the Archon level of power.

# Chapter 29: One Chaos Cycle

Planning was easy. Actually carrying it out was extremely difficult.

Since Autarch Awakener, master of the Azureflower Estate, had decided that creating ten Archon-level techniques was the trial which Daolords needed to pass, there was no way that it would be easy for Ji Ning to accomplish it. Daolord Featherdress had been an incredibly dazzling Heartforce Cultivator and Daolord, but she had only created a single supreme technique, the [Featherdress Soulthrall Melody]! Ning now needed to do the same, but this would require a sufficiently deep foundation in the art of illusions. If he hadn't build up enough experience, there would be no way he could possibly create such a technique.

"Illusions..." the white-robed Ning sat there on the stone dais, runes swirling over its surface as time moved a hundred times faster than in the outside world. His eyes were closed as he continued to meditate, with one technique after another flashing through his mind. These were all the various heartforce illusion techniques which the cultivator civilizations and the Sithe civilization had created.

Heartforce was a very mysterious type of energy! It was able to merge with other types of energy and allow one's power to increase by an explosive level. Ning was merely at the Archon level of enlightenment, but the twelfth stance of the [Heartsword] art allowed him to stand above virtually all other Archons. He was extremely close to the Hegemon level of power. This was what was so marvelous about heartforce! Heartforce illusions, in turn, were extremely common as well.

The cultivators and the Sithe had both created many different types of heartforce illusions.

"Illusions can be used like this?" Ning continuously analyzed and dissected one illusory technique after another. The weakest were at the Archon level, the stronger ones were at the Hegemon level, and a few were even more profound than that. Previously, Ning had merely read through them and memorized them; now, he was truly analyzing them. As his

analyses grew deeper and deeper, Ning began to accumulate a steadily deepening foundation in the art of illusions, and his [Dreamstar] art naturally began to slowly improve as well.

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Every single illusory art had profound mysteries hidden within them. Even though the stone dais let him remain in a constant prajna-state, it still took Ning an extremely long period of time to fully analyze and dissect every single technique. The easier ones took as little as a million years, while the longest took over a hundred million! And this was with him only analyzing them up to the Archon level; for now, he was completely unable to analyze the more profound mysteries.

In total, it took Ning over fifty-six billion years to finish analyzing all of the illusory arts. If it hadn't been for the stone dais, it probably would've taken him ten thousand times as long!

Next, Ning began to sort out and arrange the various insights he had gained. He began to merge them together, seeking to create an illusory art that belonged to him and him alone! After gaining so many new insights, he immediately concluded that his [Dreamstar] art was far too simple and crude; in fact, Ning felt that there were some fundamental problems with its most basic underpinnings. Thus, he chose to completely start from scratch and create his own illusions.

Another three billion years went by, at which point Ning finished sorting through and merging all of his many insights together into a new illusory art, which he named the [Unfettered Dreamlands].

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Within the second hall inside the palace. Atop the stone dais. Ning was still seated in the lotus position, but his demeanor and aura had both somewhat changed. In the past, this white-robed youth's aura had been stately and reserved, almost like a blade that had been hidden within a sheath; when drawn, his sharpness would be on full display! Now, however, Ning's aura had become a bit more ephemeral and ghostly. He was like a drifting cloud, a gust of wind, a fluttering leaf, a ray of warm

sunlight that broke through the darkness.

Cultivators who saw him would feel a very comfortable feeling, and in their hearts they would naturally feel very well-disposed towards Ning. Even cultivators who had originally been nervous or depressed would feel much more relaxed just by looking at Ning.

“To be free and unfettered... for cultivators, this is far too rare. In my illusions, however, I can find perfect, unfettered freedom.” Ning smiled.

The [Unfettered Dreamlands]... as the name suggested, the crucial parts to it lay in the words ‘unfettered’ and ‘dreamlands’.

‘Dreamlands’ – Ning would set up an artificial world of dreams within the illusions, with Ning being the one to envisage and design the elements within this world! In fact, Ning could even set up a special region within his actual heartworld and use it to simulate the appearance of his ‘dreamlands’. Ning’s goal was to make the dreamlands as real-looking as possible, while also filled with fatal allure. He would then adjust it slightly in accordance with each target.

‘Unfettered’ – This referred to how the goal was to cause the opponent to unconsciously be seduced by the illusions. There were some things that simply couldn’t be forced; only when you managed to lower the natural resistance generated within the depths of your foe’s Dao-heart would you be able to make it more difficult for the foe to escape your illusions.

Think about it; why was it that even the more shallow illusions were often focused on the flaws in people’s hearts? For example, Ning deeply desired to revive his wife, and so illusions targeted at Ning would often conjure up images of Yu Wei and allow Ning to ‘reunite’ with her! This was because Ning wanted to see this more than anything else, making his Dao-heart less resistant to it. If Ning’s Dao-heart was weak, he might succumb to the illusions and be trapped in them for longer, increasing the chances of him dying.

In a battle between experts, a second of slumber could result in death. The words ‘unfettered’ and ‘dreamlands’ served as the nucleus of the [Unfettered Dreamlands], which then transformed into countless arcane

and profound illusions.

“Senior,” Ning said.

“Hm?” The distant seated white-robed elder opened his eyes to look at Ning.

“Here is the second technique.” Ning pulled out a jade scroll upon which was recorded the information regarding the heartforce illusion technique which Ning had created, the [Unfettered Dreamlands]. The jade scroll flew over to float in front of the white-robed elder.

The white-robed elder accepted it, inspected it carefully, then nodded. “You spent just over half a chaos cycle and have managed to create an Archon-level illusory art. Not bad, not bad. It seems you might have a chance to actually create the ten necessary techniques.”

Ning explained, “I’ve always been skilled in heartforce, which made analyzing those illusions fairly easy! As for the other Daos... there are some which I’m not skilled in at all. Creating techniques for them shall definitely be far more difficult.”

He was the most highly skilled in the Dao of the Sword. He had already created the fourth stage of the [Omega Sword Dao] before arriving at the Azureflower Estate.

He was just slightly less attuned to heartforce, but thanks to the effects of the stone dais he had been able to create the technique after nearly sixty billion years. However, if you factored in temporal acceleration, he had actually spent over half a chaos cycle! <sup>1</sup> Finally, he had been able to develop the [Unfettered Dreamlands] technique.

When cultivators calculated their lifespans, they calculated based on the ‘real’ time they had spent, excluding the benefits of accelerated time. By now, Ning had spent more than half a chaos cycle in ‘real’ training.

Next, Ning needed to accumulate insights into the Dao of Water and the Dao of Lightning. After that would come the Dao of Fire, and then would be the Daos of Space, Time, Earth, and a few others.

In truth, cultivators generally focused on a single Dao and wouldn’t

waste time on multiple other Daos. If you reached an extremely high level in a single Dao, you would gain access to movement techniques, invulnerable forms, defensive abilities, offensive abilities, and more. This was true for all Daos, and so there was no need to diversify. The Ninedust Sectlord, for example, focused exclusively on the Dao of Water.

However... from another perspective, it could be said that training in multiple Daos had its own benefits as well. The differences between the Daos could bring inspiration, as all Daos were linked together!

“With the stone dais helping you, you should be able to do it.” The white-haired elder looked at Ning. “Creating these ten techniques will be of help to you as well. The Daomerge for the Omega Daos is simply too difficult... creating multiple Archon-level techniques will only benefit you, not harm you.”

“Understood.” Ning nodded. He had to admit this was true.

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And so, Ning began to focus on analyzing the Dao of Water.

The Dao of Water was a vast Dao which many, many people trained in. Ning began to analyze one technique after another. There were many major powers who had become supreme Daolords thanks to the Dao of Water. Some had become Archons, while a few had become Hegemons! However, everyone had a different interpretation of the Dao of Water, even though the Dao itself was the same.

Alas, Ning felt tremendous regret that despite there being countless techniques pertaining to the Dao of Water, there was no ‘Omega Water Dao’.

Obviously, Ning would need to spend much more time on the Dao of Water than he had on illusions. And so, time slowly flowed on.

In the blink of an eye, Ning had spent over an entire chaos cycle of ‘actual time’ training within the Azureflower Estate... and he was still absorbed in his studies.

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Everything was so peaceful and calm. No one in the Flamedragon Realmverse knew that during the past chaos cycle, an utterly terrifying Heartforce Cultivator had arisen.

Ever since the Flamedragon Realmverse had lost its Heartforce Hegemon, it had never given birth to another Eternal Emperor who was also a Heartforce Cultivator. And indeed, it was extremely rare for Eternal Emperors to be Heartforce Cultivators.

Although Ning's heartforce was quite strong upon him becoming a Daolord of the Fourth Step, allowing him to easily trap a large number of Emperors with illusions during the battle for Silksnow City, his actual skill in illusions was rather low. He had completely relied on his powerful heartforce to gain victory. Ning's illusions had been completely ineffective against Archon-level opponents.

Now, however... Ning's weakness in illusions had been addressed. He had truly skyrocketed to a brand new level, the Archon level.

The stability of the Omega Sword Dao ensured that Ning's heartworld was probably second only to that of a Heartforce Hegemon's! This made his heartforce indescribably powerful. Now that both his heartforce and his illusory arts had reached incredibly high levels, even a number of the Archons of the Sacred Cities would fall to his illusions. In a life-and-death battle, being trapped in an illusion for even a brief instant would make it so that you lost control over your invulnerable form... and Ning would take advantage of that moment to slay his foe with ease.

# Chapter 30: Heading Off

It was difficult for the three mighty Hegemons to slay Archon-rank Emperors, precisely because the Emperors could use their invulnerable forms to flee. However... if they were trapped in illusions, they would be unable to escape or to maintain their invulnerable forms. Their minds would've been drawn into the illusions, allowing them to be killed.

Heartforce Emperors were the terrifying stuff of legends. The entire Flamedragon Realmverse didn't have a single Heartforce Emperor in it at present. For Heartforce Cultivators to succeed in the Daomerge was far more difficult than for those who trained in any other Dao; most likely, it was second only to those who walked the path of the Omega Dao. Heartforce Cultivators had to have extremely large and stable heartworlds if they wished to have a chance at the Daomerge.

Thus, Heartforce Cultivators would generally improve themselves to at least the supreme Daolord level. Only then would they have sufficiently large and stable heartworlds for them to even consider the Daomerge.

When Ning had visited the alternate universe, he had seen the corpse of a Heartforce Hegemon. He had also seen the Heartforce Hegemon who had died in combat against the Sithe. Both of those were Emperors!

It was virtually guaranteed that a Heartforce Cultivator who succeeded in the Daomerge would become a Hegemon-rank Emperor! Only a tiny, tiny fraction of them would end up as Archon-rank Emperors.

Ning, however, was already comparable to Archon-rank Heartforce Emperors in power! Although he wasn't able to threaten Hegemons, he was more than capable of threatening the other Archons.

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While Ning was training, other things were happening within the distant Terror Starsea.

Rumble... countless streams of fire formed a giant whirlpool that surrounded and filled this vast territory. The flames were incomparably

beautiful, and they actually converged to form flowers.

A skinny white-haired, white-browed man simply stood there at the edge of the beautiful vortex of flames, staring into it. His white brows fluttered as his oily green eyes stared intently into the very center of the vortex.

“Hmph. Ninedust... no matter how crafty you are and how much you struggle, you’ve still fallen into my trap.” Archon Silksnow smiled coldly. “It took me a hundred million years, but I’ve finally found you. Did you think I really want you dead? No... killing you is just a perk. The person I really want to kill is Daolord Darknorth?”

A frenzied, murderous look was in Archon Silksnow’s oily green eyes. “You have chosen a path of death. You are actually helping me out tremendously by charging into the ‘Jadefire Realm’! Haha... all I need to do is send word of your predicament, and I trust your dear friend Daolord Darknorth will come here to rescue you. I’m not able to kill him... but the Jadefire Realm is!”

“The two of you will both die here.” Archon Silksnow’s eyes burned with savage hate. In truth, when he had first entered the Terror Starsea, his plan had been to kill Ninedust and steal his treasures. He had carefully searched through many places within the Terror Starsea. He was much more powerful than Ninedust and had the assistance of his realmship, which meant that he was able to escape from some of the more dangerous places thanks to its help. Even though the Terror Starsea was a vast place, he was still able to find the Ninedust Sectlord.

Ninedust had felt that he was already quite deep within the vast Terror Starsea. Logically speaking, it wasn’t very likely for Archon Silksnow to be able to locate him. This was why he had chosen to carry the realmship part alongside him in a rather casual manner... but who would’ve thought that thanks to luck and the realmship resonance, Archon Silksnow had really ended up finding him?

Ninedust had immediately fled in terror. He moved fairly slowly, and so he immediately used his escape-type treasures to flee! Archon Silksnow was forced to pursue him, and this pursuit lasted for quite some time.

No matter how he tried, Ninedust was unable to shake his pursuer. In the end, he had gritted his teeth and charged straight into the legendarily lethal 'Jadefire Realm'. "Hmph, I want to see if Archon Silksnow would dare to come in as well." All Daolords were possessed of a certain defiant and fearless madness.

"He thought I wouldn't dare to go in? Of course I would. I'd rather die than live such a miserable life... but it won't be me who dies. Not only will you die, Daolord Darknorth will die as well." Archon Silksnow was legendary for his savagery, even amongst Emperors. He was savage to others but even more savage to himself. He immediately road his realmship straight into the vast flaming vortex.

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Nightfall. Vastheaven Palace.

The golden-robed Ning was seated at the peak of a mountain. The mountain wind blew past him as he sipped some wine. Su Youji was next to him, seated upon a large boulder and sharing the wine.

Ning's true body was training within the Azureflower Estate with the help of the Autarch's stone dais. This allowed him to train at a terrifyingly fast speed. Whether or not Ning's avatar 'assisted' didn't really matter, as it was of little help in speeding up his cultivation further. As a result, he now had a chance to relax and enjoy life.

The two drank together, exchanging a few casual words in conversation from time to time.

"Master... can you tell me about your Dao-companion?" Wine gourd in hand, Su Youji suddenly asked this question.

Ning smiled. "She was my senior apprentice-sister. When I first joined our sect, she was more powerful than me."

"More powerful than you?" Su Youji was surprised. In her eyes, Ning had always been a dazzling figure. He was the most powerful Daolord in the history of the Flamedragon Realmverse!

"Yes. Back then, she held a very high status within our sect," Ning said.

“The two of us actually took part in the Conclave of Immortals together. She really was quite talented. Unfortunately... she concealed a great secret within her heart which prevented her from fully and truly devoting herself to cultivation.” Ning let out a sigh. “Come to think of it... she was a truly tragic figure in both her past life and in this life.”

“Her happiest days were most likely when she was pregnant and living together with me in peace.” Ning smiled. He would never forget those days, never forget how he trained in sword-arts while the pregnant Yu Wei watched him, a merry smile on her face as she gently stroked her protruding belly. Those days of peace and bliss, when the war had yet to truly erupt, were the most beautiful memories he had.

“Our daughter is all grown up, and the plotters are all dead. My homeland is at peace... but she is gone.” Ning raised his head to gulp down the wine, then put down his gourd. “I’ve focused on the Dao my entire life. Part of it is because I wish to gain a grander understanding of the universe and see more of its sights... but the other part is because I wish to one day be able to resolve those regrets and have our family of three be reunited once more.”

“You’ll definitely succeed, Master,” Su Youji said.

“In the past, it was just a wild dream... but now, I can feel that I’m closing in on success.” Ning smiled. “This is proof that even the wildest of dreams can be made real.”

“If the three of us can be reunited, everything will have been worth it, haha. So what if I pass the Daomerge? So what if I become a Hegemon or an Autarch? I’ll still just be living a life of solitude.” Ning raised his head up high to drink more wine.

The wind continued to blow, but the night was very calm. Su Youji just watched Ning silently. She could sense that Ning’s innermost heart had already been filled. There was no way at all for another person to enter it.

“Darknorth! Darknorth!” A cry rang out from afar.

“Big brother?” Ning turned, only to see a figure fly towards him from afar. It was Emperor Solesky. “Come, come! You came at just the right

time. Let's drink!"

"I have important news to report!" Emperor Solesky landed on the top of the mountain, a worried look on his face.

"Important news? Tell me about it," Ning said.

"The Ninedust Sectlord has been trapped within the 'Jadefire Realm' of the Terror Starsea! His life could end at any moment," Emperor Solesky said frantically.

"What?!" Ning turned pale as a solemn look appeared on his face. "The Jadefire Realm of the Terror Starsea?"

The Jadefire Realm was a deathtrap which the Sithe had set up during the Dawn War. Countless Emperors of the cultivator civilizations had died there during that great war! In the end, the Sithe had been defeated and the Jadefire Realm badly damaged... but it remained a place of great danger. Not even Hegemons dared to go too deep within it.

However, Ning wasn't afraid of it. He had his Shadowless form as well as his Sithe Protector golem, 'Whitethaw'. Hegemons were able to enter and scout the outer areas safely, which meant that he was strong enough to deal with the dangers as well.

"Yes, the Jadefire Realm." Emperor Solesky nodded. "This information is absolutely trustworthy. My good friend, Daolord Badlands, sent me the same information a while ago. He said that he engaged in some Numerancy to test it, and found it to be genuine. The Ninedust Sectlord is indeed in great peril. However... Badlands told me to warn you that you are the real target. He was unable to calculate if you will be in danger or not."

"I'm the real target?" Ning nodded slowly. "Help convey my thanks to brother Badlands."

"Ninedust didn't ask me for help. That means he is worried about implicating me in this affair... but somehow, news of it still spread. That means this is likely an enemy plot." Ning nodded. "If Badlands' Numerancy says that this is a plot targeting me... the person who holds the greatest grudge against me is Archon Silksnow and the Emperors

under his command. Alternately, it could be the Aeonians.”

“Darknorth, the Jedefire Realm is a legendary deathtrap of the Terror Starsea. Not even Hegemons dare to go too deep into it,” Emperor Solesky said worriedly. “Don’t let yourself fall for their schemes.”

Ning nodded: “Don’t worry, big brother.”

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The Azureflower Estate. The second hall. Ning stood up on the stone dais.

“Hm?” The nearby white-bearded elder opened his eyes. He said with surprise, “You’ve developed the third technique already?”

“Not yet.” Ning shook his head. “Not even close. Right, senior... I need to leave on some business. My Primaltwin can come here and train, right?”

“Of course! I told you, so long as you are still alive, you may come and train whenever you please,” the white-haired elder said with a nod.

“Good.”

A short while later, the black-robed Ning arrived at the estate. He entered it, sat down on the stone dais, then continued the training process. This was an Autarch’s training chambers, after all; it was far more effective than the Stone Censer of Reunion, which Ning had already left in the Three Realms for his master Subhuti, his daughter, and his parents to use. In the future, it would be the supreme treasure of the Three Realms.

As for Ning’s true body? He left the Azureflower Estate by himself, beginning to advance through the Flamedragon Realmverse towards the Terror Starsea.

# Credits

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Epub: [Estevam](#) / [dotNOVEL](#)